

University of Aberdeen

## 'Living Heritage' Workshop, Quinhagak, AK, August 8-11, 2018

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## **'Living Heritage' Workshop, Quinhagak, AK, August 8-11, 2018**

*Notes from the meeting (taken by Charlotta Hillerdal)*

### **Participants:**

Grace L. Hill, President Qanirtuuq Inc.

Warren Jones, CEO Qanirtuuq Inc.

Charlotta Hillerdal, University of Aberdeen

Rick Knecht, University of Aberdeen

Benjamin Charles, AVCP

Joshua Cleveland, Native Village of Kwinhagak

Aron Crowell, Smithsonian Institution

Neil Curtis, University of Aberdeen

Emma Guest, Quinhagak Heritage Inc.

Cheryl Heitman, Education/Volunteer

Stephan Jones, Quinhagak Heritage Inc.

Melia Knecht, Museum of the Aleutians

Edouard Masson-Maclean, University of Aberdeen

Julie Masson-Maclean, University of Aberdeen

Eva Malvich, Interested Party

Anna Mossolova, Tallinn University

Molly Odell, Alutiiq Museum

Peggie Price, Principal of Quinhagak School

Feng Qu, Liaocheng University, University of AK, Fairbanks

Monica Shah, Anchorage Museum

Anna Sloan, University of Oregon

Jamie Small, Qanirtuuq Inc.

Steve Street, AVCP

Dora Strunk, Yup'ik School teacher, Quinhagak

Larry Strunk, High School teacher, Quinhagak

Lonny Strunk, Kuinerrarmiu

Robert Strunk, HS Graduate, Quinhagak

Alice Watterson, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design



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*Picture from the workshop (by R. Knecht)*

### **Nunalleq Culture and Archaeology Center**

Nunalleq Culture and Archaeology Center is the first Alaska Native owned culture centre and archaeological repository in the Yup'ik culture area. It is currently housing c. 60,000 artifacts from the Nunalleq archaeological excavation, run since 2009 in collaboration between Qanirtuuq Inc. and the University of Aberdeen, UK. The Culture Center is operated by the non-profit incorporation Quinhagak Heritage Inc., QHI. on behalf of the community of Quinhagak.

The message from (and for) the community manifested through the Culture Centre were voiced at the beginning of the workshop by Grace Hill, Warren Jones and Joshua Cleveland:

In the face of social and cultural changes “You are Yup'ik regardless”, but Culture centres and museums will help us be healthy connecting to a historic and traditional Yup'ik past.

One of the biggest reasons behind the decision to excavate Nunalleq was to save the artefacts for the younger generation; “For our kids to never forget where we are from”.

A central concern for the people of Quinhagak is language - to see younger generations use Yugtun, and to keep the language alive.

The Culture Centre aims to serve the Yup'ik community to preserve Yup'ik heritage, support a Native way of life, and serve as a platform for revitalization.

Museums Changes Lives <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives>



## Culture Centre Core Activities

It is recognised that the Culture Centre have an obligation to look after the collection; the preservation and curation of artefacts. The Culture Centre and the Nunalleq project is saving heritage for the future.

The culture centre should function as a platform for revitalisation.

A central aim for the Centre is to utilize the cultural knowledge and skills local to Quinhagak and to lift these crafts skills and values in recognition of the local expertise.

It is suggested that a collections committee of community members is formed

- **Collections policies & Guidelines**

The daily operation of the culture center requires guidelines and policy documents to be developed - for exhibitions, dealing with documents, donations etc.

The Aluutiq Museum offer their policy documents as guidelines for developing specific policies for the Nunalleq Culture and Archaeology Center (Molly Odell)

Policies need to be set up regarding **what the collection should entail**. What kind of artefacts will the Culture Centre/repository accept if donated/brought. What should the collection include/not include. Should the collection be restricted to archaeological material? Will the collection also include an archive of oral recordings/stories in the future? These decisions need to be taken by QHI.

Policies regarding the collections area

Policies how to deal with objects

-donations<sup>1</sup>

-objects of sensitive nature and restrictions for public

-unprovenanced artefacts

Guidelines informing on land ownership and ownership of artefacts should be drafted

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<sup>1</sup> It should be made clear to a donor that a donation comes with no guarantee to exhibit. To protect the non-profit status a (monetary) value cannot be given for the artefact/object - by policy. Accept donations and give receipt but do not discuss money/value transfer value.



- **Collections Database**

A collections database are to be set up, including the catalogue of artefacts (for example <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/software/>). Published research material, and other publications should also be collected in an archive at the centre.

- **Training**

-training local decision makers and develop local skillsets

-The Alutiiq Museum offer peer-to-peer consultation for the person(s) working at the Culture Centre

-Training available through different web based resources that offers online museum training. Good resources can be found through: Canadian Association of Conservation of Cultural Property- <https://www.cac-accr.ca/> and American Association of State and History <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/affiliated-societies/american-association-for-state-and-local-history>

-The Anchorage museum can offer collections/exhibitions training/placement a week at a time (Monica Shah)

-Is there possibility for persons working at the Culture Center to receive training/independent credits on University level (University of Aberdeen?)

## **Accessibility**

The Culture Centre and the collection being housed in Quinhagak turns the question of accessibility on its head. Many collections have been removed from their local context, but are readily available for researchers and global tourism. The Nunalleq collection is readily available for the local community - but the Culture Centre must also work for keeping the community interest (through culture programmes and exhibitions (see below)).

Outreach and accessibility should be considered on different levels; local, regional, and global.

- **Visitors/Tourism**

The aim should be to keep the centre open for local visitors as well as for tourists. It may not possible to keep it open every day, but at least once a week during tourist season would be ideal. The centre should also serve the local community for education/outreach purposes and other events/





- **Research**

The archaeological material is to be made available for research. Researchers are welcome to visit the collection in Quinhagak. During their visits they contribute to the local economy by boarding in Quinhagak.

Visiting researchers commit to share their findings with the community and to send their publications to be stored in the Community Centre database. Procedures to follow up on visiting researchers should be developed to make sure this takes place

Visiting researchers should commit to write a summary of their research and present their results in accessible language to be shared with interested community members and the school. This way research can be included in the school curriculum.

- **Students**

Students have been part of the Nunalleq excavation since the start, and for the last two years at the field lab/conservation lab facilitated by the Culture Center. In the future it might be possible to offer placements at the Culture Centre for students in for example Museum Studies programmes. These placements could be an asset for the Centre as well as for the students.

- **Artists**

The Culture Center could work as a hub for artists and facilitate artist residencies for artists who want to come and study/be inspired by the archaeological collection. An artist residency stipend could potentially be instigated to support this (pending on funding).

The culture center might host an art 'festival' as an annual or biannual event, which might potentially bring artists to the village. To these events artist - local and regional - may be invited to engage with the artefacts - and each other - be inspired, and be given space to develop this wherever it takes them. It will culminate in an exhibit.

- **Social Media Platforms<sup>2</sup>**

It is suggested that a homepage is created for the Nunalleq Culture and Heritage Center for online visibility.

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<sup>2</sup> See also 'Digital Museum' below





A facebook page could also be created. May be linked to the already existing 'Quinhagak Archaeological Project' page

## **Exhibitions**

Exhibitions should always ask who their target audience is. For the Culture Centre there are several possible answers to this - a local, regional and global level. The culture centre would like to target all these audiences in different ways, and also take care to engage younger as well as older generations. It is recognised that different aims have to be set for this, and that they would be achieved with different timelines in sight.

- **Local Exhibitions**

Local exhibitions should utilize the space provided in the Culture Center for small scale displays using the material in the collection. The exhibitions should be designed foremost for the local community, and aim to engage and keep the local interest, and to be relevant for people in Quinhagak.

Display cases have been donated (on long-term loan) to the Culture Center by the University of Aberdeen university museums, but were not shipped this summer due to some trouble with the shipping company. If/when the display cases arrive there could be an opportunity to use one of them more creatively for a small exhibition outside the culture centre - the store was suggested as a good location.

This could house a changing exhibition targeting a local audience - by and for the village. It was suggested that the children - in collaboration between the school and the Culture Centre - should create this exhibition, on topics of their choice that have significance to them. These do not have to be inspired by the archaeological material, but it should be available for them as a resource, and encourage to be creatively used. Creating the display is as much a learning experience as the exhibit in itself.

- **Digital Museum/Exhibition**

Funds will be sought to develop an online exhibition/digital museum. The AHRC *Follow on Funding for Impact an Engagement* has been identified as a possible funding source. Long term sustainability could be ensured by an agreement form the University of Aberdeen to host the exhibition - inquiries will be made about this.

A digital museum/exhibition could be made for a regional - or even global - audience, and provide virtual access to (parts of) the collection. A digital museum should not aim to display the whole collection, but to highlight objects in an







online exhibition. This may also work as a platform for global presence and advertisement of the collection. A basic digital catalogue of artefacts can be part of the digital museum, but ultimately people and researchers who are interested in the collection should be encouraged to go to Quinhagak.

An important point was made of making sure that the exhibition is not 'stuck in time'. It should be possible to update- at least partially, and have some interactive aspects to it. It should be relatively easy to add things to it. Another way to keep the exhibition interactive is to include a 'community commentary' where visitors can add their reflections.

One suggestion is that the online exhibit work with the school and let the students design part of the exhibition as a curated online exhibit. This should be centred within the Culture centre, but creates a clear connection to the school.

A digital exhibition has potential to engage younger people as well as provide access to the collection on a regional and global scale. It should be designed with this in mind, to target different audiences.

An online exhibition can be part of the marketing of the Culture Centre.

- **Travelling exhibition**

A travelling exhibition would give more people the opportunity to see the collection, and could also encourage interaction with the community. The Nunalleq artefacts is of world-class quality and may be of interest for museums etc.

In terms of sustainability a travelling exhibition may be a way of earning money. It would, however be advisable to work with a company that does exhibitions like this, and only engage in it if it pays.

A travelling exhibition is something for the future, when the culture centre is properly established and other exhibitions in place.

- **Artefacts on loan**

An alternative is to loan artefacts from the collection to regional museums as a way to give access to the collection for regional communities.

- **Banners presenting the collection**

Pull out banners presenting the collection could be an easy option to a travelling exhibition, with six to eight banners permanently on tour. They could make their







appearance on events such as the Camai dance festival, and may also be a way of advertising the collection and getting people to come to Quinhagak to see it.

- **Photo Exhibition at Raven Airport**

It may be possible to set up a deal with Raven Airport to house a photo exhibition on Nunalleq. This could be an excellent way of advertising the collection/facility regionally, but also exposing it to all the fishing tourists that come through the airport. This might be done quite easily considering all the images already existing within the project, and may potentially draw a lot of attention to the collection (regionally).

## **Education and Outreach**

Education and outreach should engage in the archaeological material and Yup'ik culture, and also focus on traditional skills, traditional values, and language revitalisation.

Different Culture programmes and Outreach activities should serve to lift up local skills, and to recognise and value the local expertise. These activities should not only target children and young people.

Museums Changes Lives <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives>

- **Education Pack: *Nunalleq - Stories from our Ancestor's village***

As part of the project outputs from the AHRC-grant a digital learning resource has been developed for school children presenting the results from the archaeological excavations, including a reconstruction of the precontact house at Nunalleq, and the way of life at site. The Education Pack(EP) is designed as an interactive storytelling platform through which children are able to engage with Yup'ik culture and history. The education pack engages in traditional skills and traditional ways of life parallel to the archaeology.

Digital reconstruction artist and archaeologist Dr Alice Watterson has worked with Nunalleq archaeologists and local community members to create this, trying to capture a multiplicity of voices in telling the story of Nunalleq. A first version of the Education Pack (EP) will be ready to be sent to local schools by the end of 2018 on memory sticks. A future aim is to make it accessible online as a downloadable file.

- With the ambition to make the EP more useful as a teaching resource in school worksheets will be developed in consultation with school teachers. These will include exercises to engage children in hands-on activities.





The possibility of engaging community members to create replicas for this purpose was mentioned.

- There is possible scope to develop lesson plans with support in the EP
- The EP could also be used as a resource to teach/engage children traditional skills and values.
- The EP was identified as a potential tool for teaching Yup'ik language. Alice Watterson and Charlotta Hillerdal will work with local Yup'ik teacher Dora Strunk to pursue this, and identify available grants to develop a language education version of the EP. Language revitalization grants and education grants
  - Language revitalization is a world-wide concern and an international connection could possibly be sought through Gaelic Medium Education(Scotland) <http://gaelicmediumeducation.com/> and partnering with Gaelic School. There might be an opportunity for receiving grants in such a collaboration

- **School based activities**

Several possibilities to utilise the collection for teaching were suggested, as well as opportunities to use archaeological procedure, and the scientific questions raised in the Nunalleq project as real life examples in teaching of various subjects. student manual and syllabus

Some suggested topics (apart from the obvious Yup'ik history) include:

- Archaeology 1:1 - how do you care for artefacts/collections - could also be linked to chemistry
- Yup'ik language
- Archaeological process
- Archaeological forensic science
- Global warming

The possibility of involving the school/children in designing exhibitions - both physical in the village and virtual online - was also raised.

The collection could be used to develop 'Education kits' with replicas of artefacts to be used by the school for teaching (checking them out from the culture centre). These kits could be designed based on different themes (i.e. 'hunting', 'cooking'). Local crafts people should be engaged to make these replicas.





- **After school activities**

The culture centre provides a space for informal learning separate from the school environment. It could offer after school activities for younger children and teenagers. Something that could be a weekly recurring activity, maybe on weekends as well. Separate activities should be offered for teenagers. The Culture Centre can offer ongoing engagement.

The continuity of a weekly activity offers the possibility to follow something through the whole process (from planning and choosing grass to a finished basket).

An after-school club engaging in traditional and cultural Yup'ik activities was suggested, maybe engaging local elders. A weekly youth club centred from the Culture Centre.

A 'young archaeologists' club was also suggested for engaging the younger children.

Creativity and hands-on activities should be central

- **Workshops**

The culture center can also offer occasional workshops for the community members - taught by local artists and crafters/elders as well as invited artists. There are grants available for such activities (i.e. the CIRI foundation and Alaska State Council on the Arts who were the sponsors of the arts workshops run by QHI during the week).

For the purpose of workshops and culture camps (see below) QHI should make an inventory of local crafts people and local skillsets. What activities are performed in Quinhagak, and who can teach. Such an inventory may also strengthen the status of local arts and crafts.

Workshops does not have to be straightforward teaching, but can be driven by the artefacts - and the question behind them: How did they do that? Artists/teachers and students can research this together, and gain knowledge (and skills) in the process of research and learning. This can be part of a healing process.

- **Culture Camps**

While workshops mainly cater towards the local community, culture camps could be offered by the Center on a regional scale - particularly during the





summer months when schools are closed. The program should focus on Yup'ik way of life, traditional value, Yup'ik culture and heritage.

Local Elders and crafts people could be engaged to teach at the Culture camps, as well as possibly invited crafts people or artists. Making living from the land and water, arts and stories /

- Wellness and Healing - Reconnecting with traditional way of life and heritage is known to help people both mentally and physically.

Diabetes program (Eva Malvich) - programmes for getting people physically active and engage with traditional lifestyle. There can be an opportunity for the Culture Centre offering this and introducing people to their past through the collection in a very powerful way.

- **Community Events**

- Annual/Biannual Yup'ik Culture fest  
An annual or biannual fest celebrating Yup'ik culture and heritage through different workshops, events and performance.
- 'Antiques Roadshow Quinhagak'  
Let people bring in their artifacts and heirlooms to get advice on them, and also survey what people have at home. It would also be an opportunity to inform people on how to care for old artefacts in their homes "keep the baskets out of the sunlight"  
and How we deal with archaeological finds and artefacts

## Pathways to Partnerships and Engagement

- **Professional Friends Group**

This meeting establish a Professional Friends group for the Nunalleq Culture and Archaeology Center. The group will be able to offer:

- consultation to the community
- opportunities to meet peer to peer
- opportunities for training/placements in museums (Anchorage Museum/The Alutiq Museum)
- student placement in Quinhagak (University of Aberdeen)
- professional development
- electronic support
- business and admin guidance (AVCP)



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- strategic planning (AVCP)
- applying for grants together
- excess supplies
- skype conferences

A listserv will be established for this group

- **Sharepoint/Buying Pool for chemical etc.**

This could be a way to share supplies and information about what is available within the sector and with other culture centers - in form of surplus supplies, furniture etc. when exhibits close etc.

It may be possible to work with shipping companies to donate shipping.

- **Partnering**

Partnering with Coastal Villages <http://www.coastalvillages.org/> in sustaining local heritaga collections

Get support from Calista and the Tribe - which so far has shown little interest for the project

## Possible Funding Sources

- **Grants:**

Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums <http://www.atalm.org/>

Museums Alaska Grant Collections Management Fund (Rasmuson Foundation)  
<https://museumsalaska.org/collections-management-fund/>

Alaska State Museums Grant-in-Aid <https://museums.alaska.gov/gia.html>

Tribal Historic Preservation Grants

<https://www.nps.gov/thpo/grants/index.html> - These require an agreement with the National Park Service

- **Crowd Funding**

GoFundMe Campaign - donations to cover consumables.

The experiences from other museums is that such campaigns are not always successful. It is a good idea to target something specific in the campaign - with a specific goal. This has proven more successful.



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- **Memberships**

Possibility to become a member of the Nunalleq Culture and Archaeology Centre. Experience from the Alutic Museum and the Museum of the Aleutians suggest that this may not be a way of making money, but we think we may have a unique position with all the outside students and volunteers that have participated in the excavation over the years. We may contact them directly and offer them memberships. Membership fees could be different depending on if you are local/Yup'ik/Alaska Native, student, or general public. A general public membership could be c. \$50 a year.

- **Entry fees**

Consider charging entry fees for the Culture Centre. Entry fees may also vary depending on visitors status - i.e. no entry fee for locals, but for tourists. Alternatively a donation box at the entry might work.

- **Donations**

Donations in kind as well as monetary.

- It is possible that local airlines would sponsor in shipping supplies and flying people  
Raven Airlines and Alaska Airlines. A contact in Alaska Airlines is Tim Thompson, manager of public affairs. Their foundation has previously donated to the shelter operations in Bethel (Eva Malvich).
- Barges may donate shipping to Quinhagak at end of barge season - down river from Bethel
- Oil companies surplus fly cabinets etc.

- **Casinos**

Warren Jones is exploring the possibility of getting funding from Casinos who may be wanting to sponsor cultural activity of this kind

## **Suggested Action Plan for the Culture Centre**

The following action plans are suggestions and may or may not be set in action - on an extended timeline

- Create Mission statement from the People of Quinhagak
- Find a person for the Culture Center





- Set up a Volunteer Committee, a Working Group and an Advisory Group for the Center
- Set up a Collections Committee of community members
- Adapt policies for the Culture Centre (see above)
  
- Set up archive in the Culture Centre/Repository
- Identify local elders and crafts people who can teach
  
- Make efforts to work with Calista/Tribe to keep activities going

### ***Future Aims***

- Develop training curriculum on a proven model
- Develop protocols where communities and archaeologists can work together to do these things
  
- Engage a development person/grant writer

### ***Possible roles in the future***

Expand the collections to become 'a keeping place for stories' - A digital repository for oral histories

## **Recommendations for QHI**

Consider becoming a member of the statewide museums association Museums Alaska <https://museumsalaska.org/membership/> as a tribal museum member

Consider joining the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums <http://www.atalm.org/> an international non-profit organization that maintains a network of support for indigenous programs, provides culturally relevant programming and services, encourages collaboration among tribal and non-tribal cultural institutions, and articulates contemporary issues related to developing and sustaining the cultural sovereignty of Native Nations.

Consider joining American Alliance of Museums <https://www.aam-us.org>

Consider joining American Association of State and History <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/affiliated-societies/american-association-for-state-and-local-history>

Sponsorship from Alaska Anthropological Association?

<http://www.alaskaanthropology.org/>



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### Setting the example

The Nunalleq Culture and Archaeology Center is breaking new ground in Alaska. It is of profound importance not only to the community, but also on a regional, and even global scale. The culture centre will function as a repository for Yup'ik cultural heritage and use the collections as a resource for revitalisation, health and wellbeing.

Other villages are calling (Togiak) to follow Quinhagak's lead.



*Warren Jones and Grace Hill cutting the ribbon to the Culture Center (by C. Hillerdal)*



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