

# SEALASKA HERITAGE

## **Juneau: The Northwest Coast Arts Capital**

The Engine for Southeast Alaska Arts Development  
And Gateway to Alaska Native Art

House Community and Regional Affairs Committee

State of Alaska Legislature

February 27, 2018

Rosita Kaaháni Worl, SHI President

# Introduction

In honor of my ancestors, in love for my children and my grandchildren,  
may I tell you who I am.

*Yeidiklats'úkk̓ ka K̓aaháni yóo x̓at duwasáakw*

*Ch'áak' naa áyá x̓át*

*Shungukeidí áyá x̓át*

*Kawdliyaayi Hítdáx̓ áyá x̓át*

My name is Yeidiklats'úkk̓ and my ceremonial name is K̓aaháni, meaning  
“Woman Who Stands in the Place of a Man.”

I am Tlingit. I am Eagle. I am from the Thunderbird Clan and the House  
Lowered from the Sun in Klukwan.

I am a child and grandchild of the Lukaax̓.ádi or the Sockeye Clan.



# Juneau: The Northwest Coast Arts Capital

Through all of human history, art has been prized for its spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic values.

Today we are also beginning to recognize art for its economic potential.





# Art works for the Southeast Economy

- Southeast Alaska arts is a \$58 million industry.
- Artists earned \$30 million in 2013.
- 25% of Southeast artists self-identify as Native artists.
- In rural Southeast communities, 75%-100% identify as Native artists.
- Statewide, Alaska arts is a \$505 million industry.
- 17,044 Alaskans work in arts and creative industries.



# Native arts: Potential for growth

- The economic potential of Northwest Coast and Alaska Native art is under-utilized.
- Potential can be realized by promoting Southeast Alaska and Juneau as the NWC/Alaska Native Arts Capital and economic engine for the region and state.
- NWC art is internationally recognized and in high demand.
- Alaska Native art is gaining increasing recognition.





# What is Northwest Coast art?

- With Northwest Coast art surrounding us, we in Alaska have grown accustomed to seeing NWC art, but have not recognized its significance.
- NWC art has been acclaimed throughout the world as a uniquely distinctive form of design and aesthetics.
- NWC art evolved over several thousand years in the rich and complex indigenous societies of the Pacific Northwest of North America.
- NWC art is based on ancient *formline* design principles and spatial relationships not seen elsewhere in the world. It also has the capacity for further innovation.





# Why is NWC art important?

- NWC art plays a significant role in maintaining the cultural diversity of the nation and the cultural survival of the region's indigenous populations.
- NWC art represents a major attraction for visitors and can provide untold sustainable social and economic benefits to the region and state.



# NWC arts as an economic engine

- NWC arts could become another economic engine modeled after the Santa Fe Indian Market.
- The Santa Fe Indian Market began 95 years ago to promote tourism.
- Santa Fe Indian Market brings in 120,000 visitors spending more than \$80 million on art and services over a four-day period each August.
- 900+ Native artists from 200+ tribes report earnings of 1/3 to 1/2 of their annual income.
- Imagine what we can do with more than one million visitors to Juneau during the summer months and as the community ranking sixth in the nation for our creative vitality.



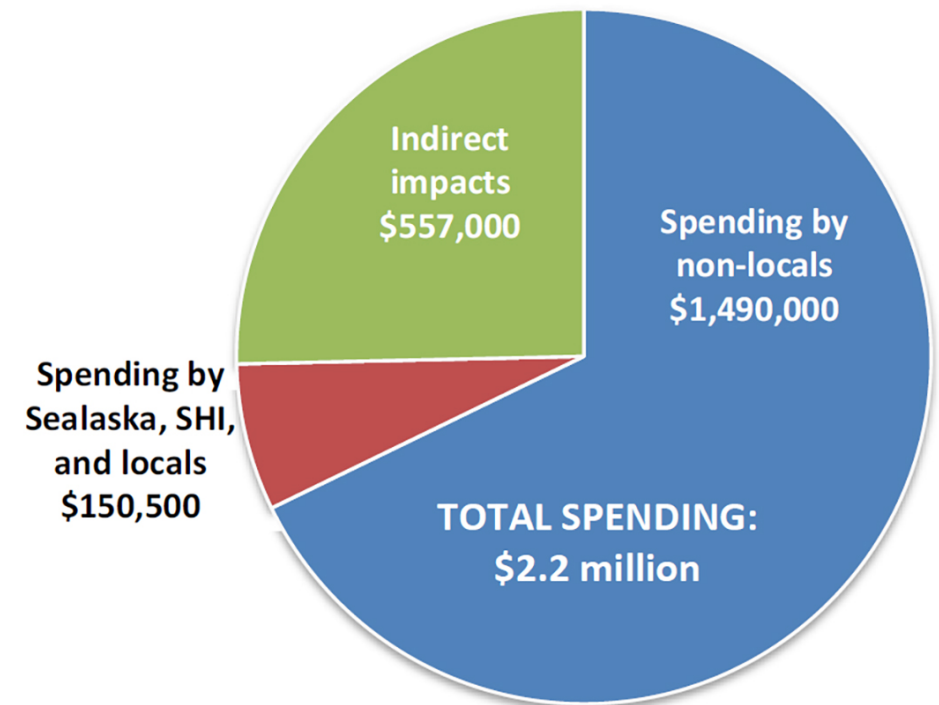


# Foundation for NWC Arts Capital: Celebration

## Celebration

- 5,000 participants over four days
- A 2012 study by the McDowell Group showed each Celebration generates an estimated total economic impact of \$2.2 million.
- Some artists have reported up to \$30,000 in sales over four days at the Native Artist Market during Celebration.
- Celebration: A growing attraction, e.g., in 2018, two art and folk art groups from Santa Fe and the Board of Directors from the nationally acclaimed art museum the Peabody Essex Museum will attend.

**Economic Impacts of Celebration 2012  
on Juneau**



# NWC Arts Capital Initiatives

- SHI has embarked on a campaign to establish Juneau as the NWC Arts Capital to promote arts throughout the region.
- SHI's initiative began with the construction of the Walter Soboleff Building, itself a work of art.
- SHI believes this vision can be achieved with the collective action and support of federal, state, tribal and local governments, businesses and private organizations.





# NWC Arts Capital Initiatives

SHI arts programs and initiatives include:

- Training new NWC artists
  - Lemon Creek Correctional Center formline and business classes
  - Gajaa Hít art classes
  - Sustainable arts projects
  - Workshops
- Educating the public
- Expanding the NWC art market
- Integrating NWC art in public places
- Designating NWC art as a national treasure



# NWC Arts Capital Initiatives: Education partnerships

SHI's arts programs include collaborations:

- A three-way partnership with University of Alaska Southeast and Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M., to provide enhanced and expanded NWC art opportunities for Alaska students.
- Integration of visual and performing arts in elementary and secondary schools throughout the region.





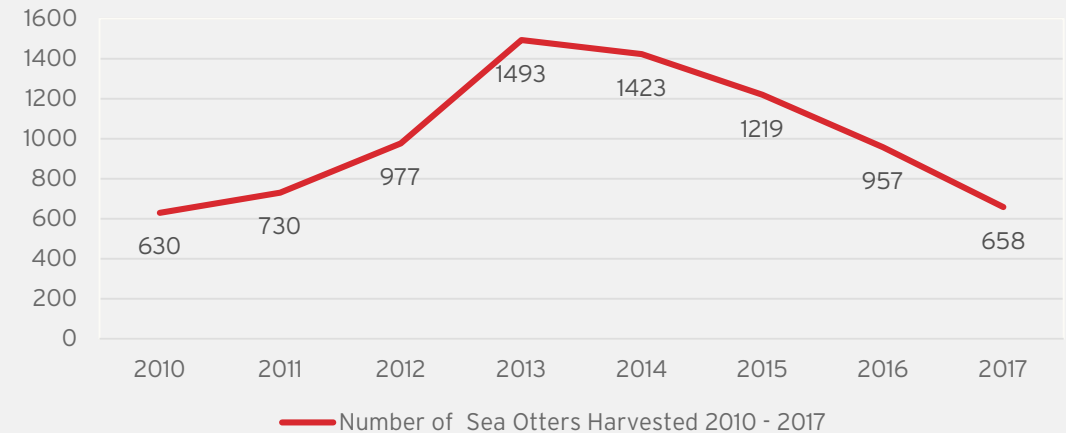
# NWC Arts Capital Initiatives: Sustainable Arts Project

SHI is seeking federal and private funding to re-implement its Sustainable Arts Project focusing on the harvesting of sea otter, tanning sea otter skins, training of artisans and craftspeople, and marketing.

The State of Alaska appropriated \$250,000 between 2012 and 2014 to SHI for the Sustainable Arts Project. In addition to training new artists and creating a sustainable cottage industry, this project had a significant impact on sea otter harvests.

The following chart demonstrates that with the implementation of the Sustainable Arts project, the harvest of sea otter increased significantly and declined after program funding ended in late 2014.

Sea Otters Harvested in Southeast Alaska 2010 - 2017



# NWC Arts Capital Initiatives: Sustainable Arts Project

SHI envisions that in the longer term the Sustainable Arts Project can be expanded to include both sea and terrestrial wildlife throughout Alaska.

It has the potential to provide significant economic impact for rural communities of Alaska and create village compatible/sustainable jobs. Preliminary studies have demonstrated that a single trained craftsperson can earn \$35,000 a year sewing and selling sea otter products.

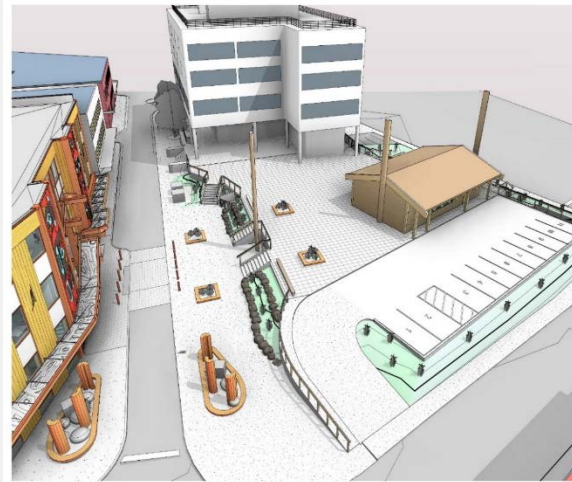
SHI has the capacity to implement this project immediately upon receipt of funding. The increased utilization of sea otters would provide significant income to Alaska Natives while simultaneously lessening the negative economic impacts of sea otter predation on subsistence and commercial fisheries.



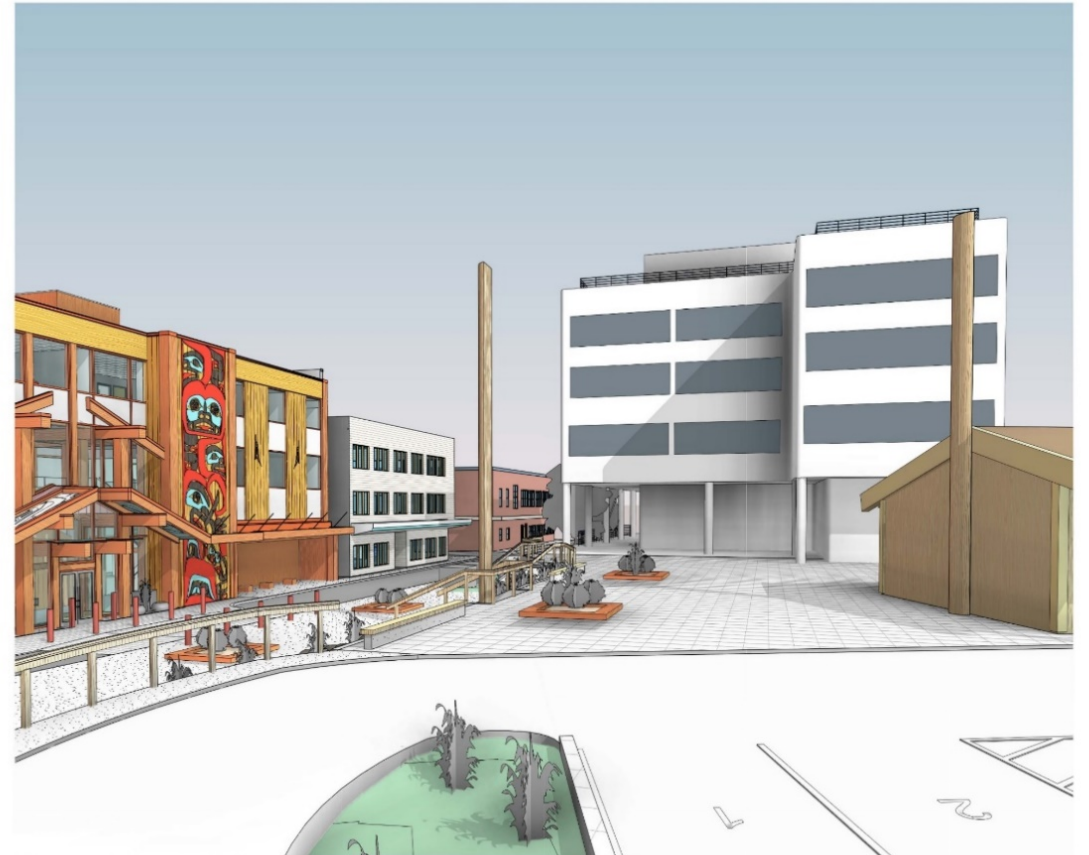
# Native Artist Park: Gateway to Alaska Native art

SHI art programs are expanding statewide.

SHI has submitted a capital request for \$500,000 to support the construction of the Native Artist Park. The park is designed to include monumental art from the major Native cultural groups.



MRV Architects



# Tlingit and Haida Cultural Immersion Park

Development of a Cultural Immersion Park, an immersion experience and destination venue that:

- Expands Native art and cultural awareness for tourists, visitors, convention attendees, government and local residents
- Provides venue for cultural events, artist/visitor interface, and Native foods
- Further stimulates arts and cultural expansion in Juneau and region



Jensen Yorba Lott site model



# Initiatives to pursue

- Recognize art as an industry and amend appropriate legislation to authorize arts training to be eligible for State of Alaska and federal employment training programs and grant opportunities
- Letters of support to Congressional Delegation supporting SHI as an Alaska Native Organization and the Native Artist Park as a “shovel-ready” project
- Support enforcement of Indian Arts and Crafts Act — consumer protection that prohibits misrepresentation of non-Native produced art
- Expansion of art programming and artist training programs, including mentorship, internship, and fellowship programs for emerging artists to improve quality of art
- Amend 1% For Art Program to require Alaskan artist commission of these art projects
- Support University of Alaska art programs
- Display authentic Native art on public facilities
- Increase publications and exhibits to educate the public about Alaska Native art
- Oppose ivory ban and initiate a public campaign about walrus ivory

# Conclusion

NWC and Alaska Native art and culture are already a Southeast Alaska economic engine. Establishing Southeast Alaska and Juneau as the NWC Arts Capital will stimulate the arts economy throughout the entire region and state.

Next steps:

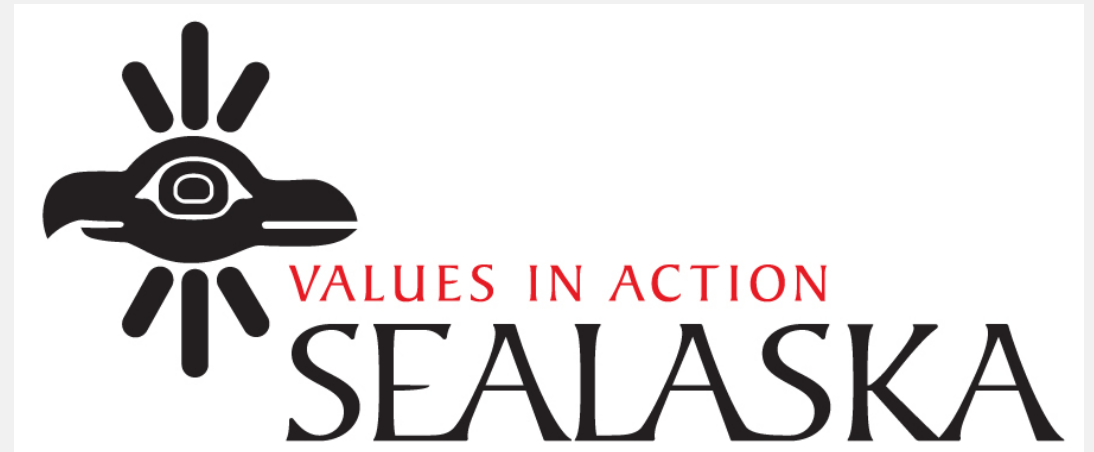
- Ensure NWC art strategies in local, state, and federal government economic development plans and initiatives
- Engage political, business, and academic leaders to recognize the economic power of the arts and promote NWC and Alaska Native Arts in all press and social media outlets





# SHI and Sealaska

- Sealaska delegated cultural and educational responsibilities to the nonprofit Sealaska Heritage Institute, which operates programs to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures
- Sealaska and Sealaska Heritage have worked collaboratively for the past 40 years



Gunalchéesh, Háw'aa, T'oyaxsn