



REPRESENTATIVE SAM KITO III

SPONSOR STATEMENT HOUSE BILL 130

“An Act naming the state library, archives, and museum building in Juneau.”

House Bill 130 designates the new Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums building in Juneau as the Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff State Library, Archives, and Museum. The State of Alaska is building this new facility for the division to protect, preserve and share its collection of objects, books, documents, photos and records of state culture and history. The building, nicknamed SLAM, is scheduled to open in the spring of 2016. It is time to choose a more formal name for the facility.

It is fitting to name the building after Russian Orthodox priest Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff. Father Kashevaroff was an Alaskan scholar, the museum’s first curator and the library’s first librarian, a descendant of Russian explorers and Alaskan Natives, and a forerunner of the division’s efforts to share Alaska’s history and culture collaboratively across disciplines.

In November 1919, Father Kashevaroff—a man renowned for his knowledge of Russian history and Alaska Natives—began his twenty-year tenure as Librarian and Curator for the Alaska Historical Museum and Library. Father Kashevaroff was a vocal and energetic advocate for the Museum and Library, and today he is fondly remembered as its true founding Father. He was uniquely suited for the position: his Russian ancestors were navigators and colonists who came to Alaska in the 1700s and married Alutiiq or Creole women in and around Kodiak. Born there in 1863 during the Russian administration of Alaska, he dedicated his life to serving the Russian Orthodox Church while maintaining his interest in Alaska history and culture. He was considered a leading authority on Alaska, and became a popular lecturer and author. The combination of his Russian and Alaska Native heritage and his ability to live and work as an American afforded him special access to both cultures which helped him develop and lead a distinctly Alaskan institution.

Museum visitors found Father Kashevaroff a memorable character. Many elderly Alaskans fondly remember how he encouraged them as children to “hang out” in the old museum after school, to wander among the picturesque displays, and to listen to his adventurous stories. In the summers, he was on-call to open the museum at any hour of the day for visiting steamship passengers.

Naming the new state libraries, archives, and museums building in honor of this historic Alaskan will recognize and preserve the legacy of Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff in a most fitting manner.

Thank you for your support of House Bill 130.