

Lingít Aaní: The Land of the Tlingit

The Ketchikan Museums are on the ancestral lands of the Tlingit, who have been living here since time immemorial. Kichxáan (Ketchikan) was a Tlingit summer fish camp around the mouth of Kichxáan Héeni (Ketchikan Creek). Ketchikan remains the home of the Taant'a Kwáan (Sea Lion Tribe) of the Tongass Tlingit.

Our Mission:

Ketchikan Museums educates, engages, and enriches our community by collecting, preserving, and sharing the history of the region.

- The Totem Heritage Center perpetuates the knowledge of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people by providing opportunities to actively learn and strengthen cultural understanding.
- The Tongass Historical Museum reflects and serves our region, connecting past and present.

Together, Ketchikan Museums is a resource for all.

2025 photos, clockwise L-R from top: Sylvia and Kip Thompson in Cedar Sail Weaving taught by Holly Churchill at the Totem Heritage Center; Tommy Joseph evaluating the condition of the Chief Kyan totem pole for restoration; Ketchikan Museums staff and friends at the opening of *History Afloat* including Deborah Mercy, Shellie Tabb, Marni Rickelmann, Erika Jayne Christian, Erika Brown, Brooke Ratzat, Ryan McHale, Hayley Chambers, Hope Krisko, and Teresa DeWitt; Sr. Curator of Collections Hayley Chambers cleaning an object for display in *History Afloat*; KGB Parks & Recreation Summer Camp kids exploring the *History Afloat* exhibit; Ellen Williams in Deer Hide Leggings taught by Janice Jackson.



Ketchikan
MUSEUMS
TONGASS HISTORICAL MUSEUM
TOTEM HERITAGE CENTER



2025 ANNUAL REPORT





Terry Leberman's handcrafted stained glass panels pay tribute to Ketchikan Creek with archival photos inspiring much of the design. Each element in the panels was carefully selected, shaped, and assembled in his studio, using a blend of Tiffany-style design, painted detail, and modern art glass. The first of the panels were installed by our friends at SignPro Of Ketchikan/Alaska Glass & Supply. When completed, all five panels will capture the seasons, moods, and life of the creek in glowing color and light. This project was made possible through the generous support of the Rasmuson Foundation and Museums Alaska's Alaska Art Fund grant program.



Demonstrating Artist/Season Tour Guide Angel Williams working on Chilkat leggings at the Totem Heritage Center, teaching visitors about textile weaving and local culture (above). KGB Parks & Recreation Summer Camp kids racing their own handcrafted sailing vessels made at the Museum (below).



COLLECTIONS

- Accepted 75 new accessions with over 663 individual items (excluding several large archival collections). Thank you to everyone who generously donated artifacts and stories to the Museums!
- Provided public access to collections and archives available at KetchikanMuseums.org.
- Responded to 244 requests for research or historical photograph reproductions for a variety of personal, scholarly, and government projects.
- Received 26 loaned items from 4 lenders for *History Afloat* at the Tongass Historical Museum; 14 loaned items from 8 lenders for the Totem Heritage Center's Instructor and Student Case; and 18 loaned items from 9 lenders for *Cedar: Tree of Life*, also at the Museum.
- Produced a monthly Artifact of the Month article. Our gratitude to the staff of the Ketchikan Daily News for publishing these!
- Utilized 277 volunteer hours between 2 volunteers.
- Worked with a photographer to document 383 artifacts and loans, and the Museum Attendant scanned 3,032 institutional images.

PROGRAMS & OUTREACH

- Hosted 138,442 visitors at the Tongass Historical Museum and the Totem Heritage Center, a 16% increase over 2024. This includes locals, school groups, adult students, researchers, and visitors. Our online interactions saw a 28% increase for Virtual Exhibits with 17,184 visitors, a 96% increase to Past Perfect Online with 9,777 users, 213 YouTube subscriptions with a 115% increase to 12,211 video views, and a 7% increase to the Ketchikan Museums site with 21,310 visitors.
- Thank you to our seasonal staff for being wonderful hosts to a record number of visitors: Angel Williams, Clancy Thomas, Conall Doss, Daniel Tabb, Katherine Murphy, Lori Zagar, Mary Kowalczyk, Rebecca Mike, Sarah Kleeman, Sharri Davis, and Spencer Doss!
- **Museum Midday** presentations were offered on the first Thursday during the fall and winter: *Ketchikan's Dive Center: More than Just Diving* with the Wind & Water Dive Center, *Fame and Shame: Beyond Seward's Folly*, a virtual program and tour with Seward House Museum, *History Afloat* Oral History Listening Event and Preview of new Featured Exhibit with Brooke Ratzat and Ketchikan Museums, *Cultivating Ketchikan's Food Future* with Ketchikan Community Gardens, Outpost Agriculture, Ketchikan Agricultural Producers Association, and Ketchikan Garden Club, *Save Your Stuff: Recovering Family Heirlooms* with Samantha Forsko, *Where Fisheries, Science & Ocean Meet* with the Whitney Crittenden of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

- **49th-50th Annual Native Arts Studies Program:** Introduction to Formline with Reg Davidson, Cedar Bark Plaiting with Kandi McGilton, Beginning Regalia: Sewing Machine Workshop with Janice Jackson & Gara Williams, Spring Break Cedar Bark Weaving with Christina Weber, two Ravenstail Weaving classes with Evelyn Vanderhoop, Intermediate/Advance Regalia: Deer Hide Leggings with Janice Jackson, Model Canoe Carving with Tommy Joseph, and Cedar Sail Weaving with Holly Churchill.

Check out the [Ketchikan Museums YouTube Channel](#) to view presentations & more! Subscribe and hit the notifications button to be part of our online community.

EXHIBITS

- Installed Featured Exhibit *History Afloat* (March 2025 – January 2026), which received the Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Award through the Alaska Historical Society.
- Updated interpretive rails at the Totem Heritage Center to better identify totem poles in the Pit Gallery.
- Produced the 2025 Native Arts Studies Program instructor and student exhibit

Produced virtual exhibits of current and previous exhibitions available at KetchikanMuseums.org

Check out [Virtual Exhibits at KetchikanMuseums.org](https://KetchikanMuseums.org)

GRANTS

To celebrate the Totem Heritage Center's 50th Anniversary in 2026, Ketchikan Museums was awarded \$23,870 through Museums Alaska's Collections Management Fund and the Alaska State Museum's Grant-in-Aid program to purchase new exhibit cases in the Center's Classroom Exhibit. The cases will be built by Artifex Northwest in Seattle and delivered to Ketchikan in summer of 2026. Stay tuned for more information on the re-opening of the Classroom Exhibit on November 6, 2026!

OTHER PROJECTS

Two major restoration projects took place with Tlingit master carver Tommy Joseph, whose decades of experience ensured our community's material culture continues to stand strong. Restoration work was done on the Eagle, Raven, and Killer Whale posts at the Totem Heritage Center, and the Chief Kyan Totem Pole at Whale Park.

At the Tongass Historical Museum all doors and windows were repaced to help with energy efficiency and climate control.



Intro to Formline students at the Totem Heritage Center with acclaimed Haida artist Reg Davidson (above).



The 2025 Featured Native Arts Studies Program Instructors and Students exhibit includes work by Aanchgwanutk (Janice L. Jackson), Joanne Ray, Koot'sāa (Jessica Cox), Mitchell A. Denny, S'etina'xh (Lisa Milne), Sagoot (Katie Carlson), Serene Schreckhise, and Wesley Pawlik-Jensen. (above).



Renowned carver Tommy Joseph restored the Chief Kyan pole as well as three of the Totem Heritage Center house posts (above). New windows and doors were the final phase in the Museum's exterior envelope project, ensuring our facilities are safe, secure, and HVAC efficient (bottom).



KETCHIKAN MUSEUMS STAFF:

Administration:

Samantha Forsko, *Director*

Shellie Tabb, *Administrative Secretary* (Mar 2024 – Mar 2025)

Kristen Peterson, *Administrative Secretary* (Jul 2025 – Jan 2026)

Collections:

Hayley Chambers, *Sr. Curator of Collections*

Erika Brown, *Registrar*

Programs:

Marni Rickelmann, *Sr. Curator of Programs*

Erika Jayne Christian, *Program Coordinator*

Teresa DeWitt, *Program Assistant*

Deborah Mercy, *Museum Attendant* (Apr 2023 – Mar 2025)

Hope Krisko, *Museum Attendant* (Feb 2025 – Feb 2026; Admin. Sec. Feb 2026 - Present)

Exhibits:

Ryan McHale, *Curator of Exhibits*

2025 MUSEUM ADVISORY BOARD:

Kathy Bolling, *Borough Assembly*

Tim Flanery, *Totem Heritage Center*

Janalee Gage, *City Council* (Nov 2025 - Present)

Tim Horton (Sept 2025 - Present)

Teri Hoyt, *Vice Chair*

Chet Hugo, *Board Chair*

Gunnar Keizer

Alex Kramarczuk

Jai Mahtani, *City Council* (Nov 2024 - Nov 2025)

Laurie Pool, *Secretary*

2025 TOTEM HERITAGE CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Gloria Burns

Kevin Clevenger

Ken Decker

Tim Flanery

Nathan Jackson

Richard Jackson

KETCHIKAN HISTORIC COMMISSION

The Ketchikan Historic Commission acts in an advisory role to the Tongass Historical Society, the Ketchikan museum department, Ketchikan Gateway Borough planning and zoning commission, and the Alaska Historic Sites Advisory Committee on all matters concerning historical districts and historic, prehistoric and archaeological preservation in the city of Ketchikan.

Interested in learning more? The Commission meets monthly!



Museum Director Samantha Forsko at her baby shower and baby Reece, born in March, modeling his new Ketchikan Museums onesie (above).



Hope Krisko started at Ketchikan Museums as a collections volunteer in early 2025. She was hired as the Museum Attendant shortly thereafter and was recently promoted to the position of Administrative Secretary. She has enjoyed learning about different aspects of the museum world (above, left). Dr. Timothy Horton joined the Museum Advisory Board and is looking forward to supporting the Ketchikan community in new ways (above, right). Welcome aboard, Hope and Tim!