Community of Haines, Alaska Seeks Museum Director

Background for Potential Applicants

Summary of Executive Director Position (also see complete job description)

The Haines Sheldon Museum (HSM) seeks an Executive Director (ED) to lead our small, dynamic American Alliance of Museum (AAM) accredited historical museum. The community of Haines, Alaska and the Chilkat Valley region are rich in diversity and layered with stories. The ideal candidate will be persuasive, resourceful, energetic, and able to inspire and empower the Board, staff, and external stakeholders to advance our mission: “Collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history, art, and unique blending of diverse cultures within the Chilkat Valley region.”

A successful ED will implement that overall vision and provide the financial and operational leadership of the organization. The ideal applicant would understand budgets and finance, staff supervision, developing grants, strategic planning, and finding a visionary path that serves our Mission.

Description of Haines Sheldon Museum

The museum facility is located on the waterfront in Haines, Alaska at “Deishu,” the Tlingit place-name for trails end. The HSM, founded in 1980, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit (EIN: 92-0134317). We provide residents and visitors with high-quality, engaging, educational exhibits and programs on local history and art.

The organization is financially strong, receiving important annual support from Haines Borough, but also relying on admission fees, Museum Store sales, membership donations, annual fund raising, and grants. The 42-year-old building is aging, but well maintained. The multi-level, 7,500-square-foot facility includes galleries, collections, archives, and offices. Our collections include about 12,500 photographs mostly digitized, 4,500 artifacts, 3,200 rare or historically important books, and about 5000 archival documents.

Community and Setting

The rivers of the Chilkat and Chilkoot valleys meet tidewater near Haines. The community is dramatically hemmed between two mountain ranges that rise from the inland sea to more than 7,000 feet. Diversity characterizes the 2,500 folks who call the valley home, which includes Klukwan, a Tlingit (Alaska Native) village that has been continuously inhabited for thousands of years. About eleven percent of our populous is Alaska Native. Local governmental services are provided by two tribal governments1 and the Haines Borough, which owns and maintains the HSM building. Collectively, the artistic and cultural resources of these small communities include four diverse and dynamic museums2

---

1 Chilkat Indian Village and Chilkoot Indian Association
2 American Bald Eagle Foundation (natural history), Haines Sheldon Museum, Haines Hammer Museum, Jilkaat Kwan Heritage Center, Klukwan, AK
The region’s intact wild habitat produces remarkable fish and game resources, including five species of Pacific salmon, which support robust commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries. Economically, seasonal tourism is important, as are governmental services. The larger region, commonly referred to as Northern Lynn Canal, is noted for supporting among North America’s highest populations of bears (black and brown) and mountain goats. The region supports the highest diversity of mammals in the State of Alaska (38 species) and is a critical western flyway for migratory birds.

At latitude 58N, winters are long and can be capricious. On winter solstice, the sun rests above the horizon for about six hours. About 50-inches of precipitation fall annually, much as snow, inviting significant winter recreational interest.

Haines is remote. No road connects to Juneau, the Alaska Capital 90 miles south. Travel out of Haines to the north is possible by car. But travel to the international airport in Juneau and to many Southeast Alaska communities must be by ferry or single-engine airplane; via the state-operated ferry system or a commuter airline. Such means of travel is typical of Southeast Alaskan communities. Highway miles within the Haines Borough total about 60. Motorists cross the US-Canadian border into British Columbia 40 miles northwest of the Haines townsite. Anchorage, Alaska is another 735 paved miles westward.

**Exhibits**

**Main Gallery--Currently:** *Everything from Afar Drifts Ashore* is the English translation of “Yendestuki,” the Tlingit village formerly located on the lower Chilkat River. The exhibit addresses Tlingit culture, missionary activities, the Euro-American colonization from 1850 to the early 20th Century, the influence of missionaries, Klondike gold-seekers, and the US Army’s Fort Wm. H. Seward (1903 – 1946).

Ongoing exhibit improvements include adding directional audio of the Tlingit language. This will be incorporated into the main gallery to enrich our digital presentation of historical photographs.

**Temporary Exhibits in the Hakkinen Gallery (recent past, current, and future):**

March – April, 2023. *Mystery Beneath the Waves*—A remarkable and detailed analysis of the Klondike Gold Rush Era shipwreck—the S.S. Clara Nevada. This maritime disaster led the U.S. Congress to pass funding for the construction of lighthouses in the Alaska Territory. HSM and the Eldred Rock Lighthouse Association collaborated to create this exhibit.

May – June, 2023. *Outliers* (now showing)—Portraits by Alaska and Hawaii members of the Portrait Society of America, curated by Haines and Northwest Artist, Donna Catotti.

July – September, 2023. *Ancestors Looking Over Us—the Art of Wayne Price*. Price is a Haines resident and the Rasmuson Foundation 2020 Distinguished Artist Award recipient. The exhibition will feature works from the private collection of Wayne and Cherri Price, mostly NW Form Line pieces made by Price, or on loan from Haines residents and created by Price.
Research and Exhibit Development

Ongoing is the development of a traveling exhibit about Alaska Indian Arts, a Haines-based non-profit from the late 1950’s – 1990 as well as mid-20th Century Alaska Native arts development in the Southeast Alaska region. This project, grant-funded by the Alaska State Museum, is being managed by Zack James, the HSM Collections Manager. Zack is a skilled Tlingit NW form line artist and a content area expert.

Collections Conservancy Projects

Humidity fluctuation is a problem for many Alaska museums, HSM included. The Museums Alaska Collections Management Fund is generously supporting our project to bring to HSM a highly respected conservator starting in late September, 2023. Sarah Owen of Interwoven, LLC will conduct a Collections and Facility Assessment, followed by community and professional staff trainings in February and early March, 2024.

AAM Re-Accreditation

HSM is about to submit its “self-study” for AAM reaccreditation. The successful applicant will be coordinating with AAM and managing the completion of HSM’s reaccreditation process.

Executive Director’s Staff Supervisory Responsibilities

The ED supervises four staff: Collections Manager, Operations/Education Coordinator, Bookkeeper, and Custodian-Grounds Keeper. The HSM is supported by dedicated volunteers, seasonal help, and occasional grant-funded specialists who are also supervised by the ED.

Executive Director Compensation and Benefits

The ED position is full-time, “managerial-exempt,” meaning the position is not eligible for FSLA coverage, including overtime pay. In compliance with the HSM Personnel Policy, full-time positions receive a Health Stipend totaling $6,000 annually ($500/mo.), plus paid Annual Leave and Sick Leave accrual. With the Health Stipend, total pre-tax financial compensation will range from $70,000 to $75,000, DOE.

To Apply, Submit:

1. Cover Letter
2. Resume or CV showing museum-related work-experience, academic achievement, and museum profession associations.
3. HSM Application completed with three references (form at sheldonmuseum.org)
4. Prior to interviewing, applicants will provide university transcripts, showing museum-related courses

Submit the above as PDF copies, with subject line “Executive Director Vacancy” to board@sheldonmuseum.net

We welcome any questions! 907-766-2366; Business Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10am – 5pm.