

NEH Application Cover Sheet

Challenge Grants

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INSTITUTION

Homer Society of Natural History -- Pratt Museum
Homer, AK UNITED STATES

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Capital Improvements to Expand, Preserve, Interpret, and Share Humanities Collections*

Grant Period: From 12/2009 to 7/2015

Field of Project: Regional Studies

Description of Project: The National Award-winning Pratt Museum is dedicated to helping people explore the human experience and natural environment in Southcentral Alaska's Kachemak Bay region, one of Alaska's most biologically rich and intensively used ecosystems. The Museum is embarking on a five-year institutional development project. Support from a National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant and the corresponding 3:1 matching funds will help the Pratt make critical improvements so the Museum is able to expand, preserve, interpret, and share its history and cultural collections long into the future. This support will help the Pratt: 1) expand collections storage space and improve environmental controls; 2) construct education program space for delivery of programs that illuminate the historic and contemporary life of Kachemak Bay; 3) develop back-of house facilities for research, object conservation, and exhibit preparation; and 4) renovate galleries for humanities exhibits.

BUDGET

Fiscal Year # 1	\$100,000.00	Total from NEH	\$800,000.00
Fiscal Year # 2	\$200,000.00	Non-Federal	\$2,400,000.00
Fiscal Year # 3	\$400,000.00	Total	\$3,200,000.00
Fiscal Year # 4	\$100,000.00	Matching Ratio: 3.00 to 1	

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NARRATIVE

Capital Improvements to Expand, Preserve, Interpret, and Share Humanities Collections

INTRODUCTION

The Pratt Museum requests a Challenge Grant of \$800,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant, along with \$2.4 million of non-federal matching funds, will help the Pratt make critical capital improvements so the Pratt is able to expand, preserve, interpret, and share its collections in the history, cultures, and contemporary life of Alaska's Kachemak Bay region long into the future. This project is part of a five-year institutional development initiative that includes the addition of an education program space, gallery renovations, expanded collections storage space with improved storage system and environmental controls, full Americans with Disability Act compliance, building systems upgrade for long-term cost savings, and addition of a research and conservation laboratory. Grant and matching funds will be used for Construction and Project Costs (\$2.96M) and Collections Storage System (\$.24M).

BACKGROUND

The Kachemak Bay region is a rich confluence of cultural and natural history in Southcentral Alaska. The region's rich natural resources—including a dozen species of marine mammals, productive shellfish beds, and all five species of wild Pacific salmon—have lured diverse peoples over thousands of year. Homer, the Bay's largest community, is a composite of fishermen and boatwrights, homesteaders, artists, ranchers, and wildlife enthusiasts. On the outskirts of Homer, four Russian Old Believer communities labor to maintain religious and cultural tradition. And around the Bay, Sugpiaq Alutiiq and Dena'ina Athabaskan peoples have lived for centuries and today, maintain subsistence lifestyles in villages—some of which are accessible only by boat or small plane.

On the shore of Kachemak Bay, the 54-year-old Pratt Museum is dedicated to helping people explore the human experience and natural environment in the region through exhibits, collections, and programs. Recipient of the National Award for Museum Service, the Pratt Museum provides an opportunity for our remote community to express its civic and cultural identities as well as explore and record its history. A popular destination for summer travelers from all over the world, the Pratt introduces tens of thousands of people each year to the cultures, natural history, and arts of Alaska.

The Pratt is a multidisciplinary institution. Visitors explore Native cultures, for example, by learning about contemporary subsistence harvesting of seabird eggs via the Pratt's remote video systems, which deliver live images from a seabird rookery on the Bay, and through the lenses of Native place names, oral histories, and a community-created video of a contemporary Native seal hunt. The goals of the Pratt's exhibits and programs are not only to help people explore the Kachemak Bay region, but also to encourage visitors to reflect on their own communities and environment, thereby igniting a connection between people and place regardless of whether the visitor is from "up the road" or across the Pacific.

Each year, the Pratt serves more than 35,000 visitors and an additional 4,000 students. The Pratt is a member-supported organization and has more than 550 members and donors, a substantial local investment in a community that has a population of only 5,000. The Pratt is supported by the City of Homer through a line item on the City's annual budget. And the Museum is recognized as a model for leveraging strong partnerships within and outside the community—with entities including Alaska Humanities Forum, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Homer Council on the Arts, National Park Service, and Alaska Native villages and tribes—to ensure that local and regional needs are met.

The Pratt Museum has a distinguished track record of producing multidisciplinary, issue-oriented exhibitions and programs of national stature, such as *Darkened Waters: Profile of An Oil Spill*, a National Science Foundation and Alaska Humanities Forum-supported traveling exhibition on the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill that was shown at the Smithsonian Institution and throughout the country. Through this exhibit, more than two million people have explored the environmental impacts of the spill, and—lesser known—the impacts on people, communities, subsistence cultures, and economies in the 17 oiled coastal communities as well as across the state.

THE FUTURE OF THE PRATT MUSEUM

The Pratt has taken a systematic approach to developing long-term plans to guide institutional development. A 1997 Self Study Grant of \$19,950 from NEH helped the Museum develop a new

community-based vision for the museum. A 1998 NEH Planning Grant of \$37,000 enabled the Museum to develop its Master Exhibit Plan (MEP), *Kachemak Bay: An Exploration of People and Place*, which guides a complete redesign of the Pratt's exhibits and programs. (See MEP summary attached.) The MEP addresses the overarching theme of people and place, and includes emphases on homesteading, fishing, Native cultures, and the marine environment. The MEP outlines exhibit and program content, scholar and community member collaborators, and objects from the collections to be integrated in exhibits. The main messages of the MEP are: 1) The interplay of shaping and being shaped by our environment defines us; 2) Who we are reflects where we live; 3) Kachemak Bay is a dynamic edge—a meeting place of distinct cultural, geological, and biological forces; 4) Traditional lifestyles, Native cultures, and ecological integrity—diminished in many places—prevail in Kachemak Bay; 5) We have intricate connections to each other and to a greater world; and 6) Our actions and beliefs shape our place and future.

As with all planning at the Pratt, the MEP was developed through extensive community involvement representing the demographics and interests of the local community, including homesteaders and pioneers, Native Elders and tradition-bearers, artists, writers, commercial fishermen, and others. The process depended on collaboration with state-wide scholars, including Dr. Alan Boraas, Professor of Anthropology, University of Alaska Anchorage; Dr. Aron Crowell, Alaska Director and Archaeologist, Smithsonian Institution Arctic Studies Center; Eric Fenger, composer; Nick Tanape, Sugpiaq Alutiiq Seal Hunter and Elder; Dr. Chris Waythomas, Volcano Hazard Specialist, Alaska Volcano Observatory; Janet Klein, Archaeologist, Historian and Author; Nancy Lord, Alaska State Writer Laureate; and Dr. Bill Schneider, Curator of Oral History and Professor of Library Science, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Phase I of the two-phase MEP was implemented in 2004 with support from a \$301,720 NEH Implementation Grant and a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and through hundreds of hours of participation by scholars, tradition-bearers, community collaborators, local artists, and craftspeople. Phase I orients visitors to Kachemak Bay and its people, and introduces them to the connections between people and place. The exhibits help visitors understand the region's geography

as well as the historical, cultural, and environmental influences on people and place—through stories that illuminate the women’s homesteading experience, contemporary subsistence cultures, the impacts of commercial fishing on individuals and families, and the ways dynamic environmental forces shape how people survive here. Phase I was received with wide public acclaim, and an independent assessment revealed that the exhibit was highly effective at helping people gain knowledge in the humanities. The assessment further revealed that the exhibit compels visitors to reflect on their own lives, to “ponder the meaning of life and their own role as a member of a community and a citizen of earth,” and that the community-based process of exhibit design and implementation was transformative to participants.

Phase II exhibits will address the themes of People & Culture, Connections to Each Other and the World, and Living In and Taking Care of Our Place. As in Phase I, exhibits will be story-centered, object-rich, and developed through community collaborations. Dena’ina Elders will be invited to the Museum to sew moose hock skin boots for an exhibit that uses a collection of footwear—skin boots, beaded moccasins, Xtra-Tuf mud boots, Adidas sneakers—to help visitors explore the many cultures of Kachemak Bay. We will work with Alaska State Writer Laureate and author of *Beluga Days* Nancy Lord, Dena’ina whaling captain Peter Merryman, and whale researcher Craig Matkin to explore the geographically isolated Cook Inlet beluga whales. For centuries a subsistence food source, these white whales capture the imaginations of Alaskans and visitors alike, and were recently listed as an endangered species. And archaeologists Dr. Aron Crowell and Dr. Alan Boraas will help develop a vertical column that presents layers of human habitation around Kachemak Bay using ancient to present day artifacts. Visitors will get a deeper sense of how people are connected to each other and the natural world in the Kachemak Bay region, and how lives are shaped by change in this region. Here, we witness the impacts of global warming, urbanization, cultural transformation, and economic shifts every day.

In 2005, the Pratt developed its 2005 – 2010 Five Year Strategic Plan with participation by the Board of Directors and staff. Outcomes from the Pratt’s completion of the American Association of Museums Museum Assessment Program on Governance helped shape the strategic planning process. The Strategic

Plan (attached) recognizes the Museum's long-term vision of being a small, well-run museum that is widely-respected, financially sustainable, frequented regularly, and that actively engages its community. This summer, the Pratt will hold a planning retreat to complete its 2010 – 2015 Strategic Plan.

Concurrent with strategic planning, the Pratt completed professional assessments of its physical plant. The Pratt's aging building suffers from mechanical deficiencies, traffic bottlenecks, and leaks. Professional evaluations of the Pratt's collections storage facilities were undertaken in 1991, 1993, and 2007, and identified the need to increase and improve the quality of the Museum's collection storage space. Additional evaluations of Building Conditions (see attached Executive Summary) and Americans with Disability Act compliance identified the need to replace aging building systems and establish full handicap accessibility. Key goals of the Strategic Plan are to renovate the Pratt's 41-year-old building, make long-desired site improvements, and implement the second and final phase of the MEP.

With the Strategic Plan, MEP, professional collections storage and building assessments, and a long-term vision in place, the Pratt has entered the "pre-development" phase of what will be the most significant capital project the Museum has undertaken in its 54-year history. The goal of the project is to implement the Museum's MEP, carry out needed building/site improvements to ensure proper care of collections, develop a plan for long-term financial sustainability, and create a museum that will better serve our community and visitors now and into the future. Our vision is for the Pratt to continue to be a highly anticipated destination for travelers from across the state and the world, and a dynamic, flexible, and responsive small community-based museum where the local community feels invested and represented. The architectural and site draft concepts (attached) illustrate the Museum's welcoming approach, show an interior design that is efficient and inspirational, and integrate—and take ready advantage of—the Museum site, including spruce forest and Homer's largest urban stream. The Pratt is currently developing a Business Plan for Sustainability to guide the Museum towards long-term financial stability, key goals of the Strategic Plan and the Capital Campaign, which will make possible this ambitious project. The Pratt seeks support from a Challenge Grant to make the following improvements:

1. Preservation of Collections

The ability to expand, preserve, and interpret the Pratt's collections is the foundation of the Museum's mission, but current conditions limit our capacity to do this. The lower level of the Pratt's two-story building was originally designed for the Homer Senior Center and today, the Cultural Collections are mostly squeezed into what once was the Senior Center's kitchen. Over the last 40 years, the Pratt's collections storage has pushed its seams to include the five-foot-high crawl space under an out-building; it is now at capacity. A professional Collections Storage Space assessment concluded that, in addition to added space, improved environmental controls are necessary for the long-term protection of the Pratt's collections. Homer is perched on the Ring of Fire, one of the most seismically active regions in the world, and the Pratt has witnessed regular earthquakes and volcanic eruptions since opening in 1968. Mt. Redoubt, about 100 miles away, is currently in an eruptive period that might go on for months, and has already produced two episodes of measurable ashfall in Homer. Numerous improvements to storage have been made, but currently, the Pratt does not have adequate environmental controls to protect the collections from hazards specific to coastal Alaska, nor even basic upgrades such as solid security doors or flood alarms standard in museums everywhere.

As part of this project, the Pratt will increase its collections space by nearly doubling its current storage capacity. A Spacesaver system will maximize space efficiency and allow all the cultural collections, including historical archives, to be stored in the same area. Collections will be moved to a separate HVAC system from the occupied part of the museum, incorporating three temperature zones appropriate for long-term preservation of diverse collection types. All cabinetry will be upgraded to high quality Delta Designs cabinetry, further protecting objects from environmental fluctuations. Improvements will ensure the proper storage of the Pratt's fast-growing art collection, and a cold storage unit will house audiovisual media at the temperatures needed to slow decay, a goal of the Pratt's Media Preservation Plan prepared by SummitDay Media in January 2008. Designated workspace in the form of a research and conservation laboratory (described below) will eliminate the need to work within the collections storage, which

exposes objects to unnecessary light and humidity. Security will be improved by eliminating an existing window, installing appropriate doors, and renovating sprinkler, fire, intrusion, and flood alarm systems.

The Pratt's overarching goal is to broadcast the contents of its collections widely, in order to open the doors of possibility to researchers locally and afar. Having all objects in a centralized location will greatly improve our ability to inventory, verify the documentation and take care of our humanities collections, a necessary preliminary step to making them available online—a long-term goal. Expanded collections storage space will dramatically improve access to collections, making them available to researchers and Museum staff for study and use in interpretive programs. Increased space will also permit the continued collection of objects needed to inform the understanding of the human experience in this understudied and often wildly mythologized region.

2. Addition of Back-of-House Facilities to Enable Research and Conservation of Collections

As part of renovations, the Pratt will establish a 200-square-foot research and conservation lab—with two workbench stations, a fume hood, treatment sink, and large work table, as a place to examine collections objects and objects not yet in collections. Such space does not currently exist at the Pratt, which means some object examination occurs in a workshop outbuilding, requiring objects to be transported outdoors across the Museum's parking lot. In the lab, Pratt staff can stage objects for use in interpretive programs and exhibits, and staff and contract conservators will conduct conservation of objects, reducing the number of instances that objects will have to be sent off-site. This space can also serve as a quiet space for recording oral histories and for the "Collections and Reflections" program, which invites individuals to reflect on and interpret objects from the collections—e.g., a Russian Old Believer reflecting on a religious tapestry, or a founding member of the "Barefooters," a community of humanistic idealists settled in the 1950s at the head of the bay, telling stories from old photographs.

The addition of research space will enable the Pratt to fully realize the potential of its existing partnership with the campuses of the University of Alaska Anchorage-Kenai Peninsula College. The Pratt already

has close ties with the university, which has strong programs in the fields of cultural studies, including a Northern Studies Program and a well-established Anthropology Degree Program. A small research and conservation lab will offer invaluable research opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate degree students. The Museum, by extending its collections and newly developed research area, could provide new opportunities for valuable hands-on experiences. Students could work closely with university faculty and museum staff as they assume responsibility for particular projects at the Pratt, such as contextualizing a particular cultural collection through historical research. Additionally, students will share their research with museum visitors and the general public through the Pratt's "Object at Hand" programs, which bring objects from the collections onto the gallery floors for interpretation for visitors, through behind-the-scenes tours, and by presenting research findings at professional conferences and public forums. The Pratt is also partnering with the University on the development of a Museum Studies course, which is the first step in encouraging and guiding future University-Museum collaborations.

3. Museum Renovation to Enable Final Phase of Exhibit Development & Full Accessibility

Galleries occupy 40% of the Museum's square footage. Gallery renovations must be made in order to implement the final phase of the Pratt's MEP. Renovations will move exhibits out of lower level space, identified as "low quality exhibit space" because of lack of full handicap accessibility, low ceilings, inefficient use of space, and less than ideal security. Renovations will make the Museum fully accessible to individuals of all physical abilities and will also fix leaks, improve visitor flow, and increase efficiency of use of space. The Professional Building Conditions Survey revealed that the Pratt will need to upgrade or replace the following systems to ensure safety of visitors, collections, and exhibits, and to achieve optimum efficiency for long-term cost-savings: fire protection, heat generation/boiler, heat distribution, humidity control, air handling, plumbing, electrical, lighting, and fire and intrusion alarm systems.

4. Addition of Education Program Space

The Pratt has no space designated specifically for educational or public programs, which means that these programs take place in the galleries or outdoors. Indoor programs disrupt visitors and put

exhibits at risk of damage, and require frequent deinstallation and reinstallation of exhibits, which puts them at additional risk. Because of the region's harsh climate, outdoor programs limit participation, and space constraints limit the size of school groups to 36, although requests are frequently received from larger groups. The addition of a 1,000 square foot education program space (which will represent 7% of expanded Museum footprint) will enable the Pratt to serve as a center for community dialogue, a core value of the Pratt's 2005 – 2010 Strategic Plan. The Pratt has a long history of serving as a gathering space for humanities-related groups, e.g., women homesteaders who meet annually for a Homesteaders' Tea, a local history group interested in developing an exhibit about community history, Community Quilters who produce historically and natural historically-themed quilts, and the general public who gather to discuss important issues facing the community, (e.g., a proposed massive gold mine that would use Homer as its hub and long-term plans for development and stewardship of Woodard Creek, Homer's largest urban stream which runs under the Pratt's parking lot.) Over the years, expanded exhibits and programs have left no adequate space—besides in the galleries themselves—where these gathering can occur. In addition, the space will serve other informal learning opportunities in the region's human experience and natural environment, including Native traditions and contemporary life, pioneer history, Kachemak Bay marine life and livelihoods, and other subjects. Upon entering the new building, visitors will pass the education program space where they will witness a community and museum at work—children engrossed in explorations of Alutiiq marine mammal hunting tools, quilters creating a community history quilt, or college students studying the Museum's collections of Native baskets.

SIGNIFICANCE TO THE HUMANITIES: FOUR CASE STUDIES

1. Community-Curated Exhibits

Testament to the community-based nature of the Pratt, the Museum is regularly approached by community groups interested in developing exhibits using Pratt collections. The Museum's collections hold untold opportunities for these kinds of community-initiated exhibits and programs, provided objects

are adequately accessible and an appropriate staging area is available. The recent *Chaqenq'a: Dena'ina Fish Camp* exhibit, for example, inspired the Sugpiaq Alutiiq communities on Kachemak Bay to approach the Pratt about developing exhibits about their cultural subsistence traditions and contemporary practices. At present, browsing the cultural collections is virtually impossible, with key holdings like newspaper archives and the Joe Drew homestead collection in deep storage in a crawlspace, and others boxed in odd corners of the natural history collection room and other spaces. In addition, certain special exhibits and museum functions necessitate blocking the cultural collections with artwork and gallery furniture, making even normally accessible objects inaccessible for study for long periods. Expanded collections storage space, a same-building exhibit staging area, and a research and conservation lab will enable the Pratt to work with community groups to develop new object interpretations and exhibits.

2. Spiritual Objects Conservation and Interpretation

The Pratt is currently developing a Sacred Objects Policy, which will guide the care of spiritual objects in the Pratt's collections, including Dena'ina regalia and Russian Old Believer religious objects. With adequate collections space and storage methods, the Pratt can become a leader in collections management by working more directly with those living people who are connected to the objects in our collections. This research will connect objects and meaning, yielding new ethnographic information and enabling the Pratt to better contextualize and interpret spiritual objects for exhibits and public programs. As we establish ourselves as a trusted repository, tribes and cultural groups will be more willing to share cultural knowledge, and the Pratt, in turn, will have the opportunity to house additional objects. Participation in this kind of collections research by tribes and other groups will underscore their own sense of identity and heritage and the importance of their stories and voices in interpretations of the region.

3. Cultural Education Workshops

Every other year, the Pratt works with regional Native communities to host *Tamamta Katurlluta: A Gathering of Native Tradition*. This event grew out of successful traditional skills-building workshops offered by the Museum and tradition-bearers in Native villages on Kachemak Bay and is made possible

by more than a decade of steadfast efforts by Pratt staff to develop relationships with regional Native communities. Native cultural programming—including Native games and story-telling—have been immensely popular at the Pratt. With dozens of Native artists and tradition-bearers as well as hundreds of non-Native participants at the Museum for this event, the *Gathering* presents enormous opportunities for additional education programs in Native cultural traditions and contemporary life, through hands-on explorations and demonstrations in activities such as basket-weaving, bentwood hat design, and drumming, through which participants explore the practice and its larger cultural significance. Workshops and demonstrations in cultural practices are frequently requested by the region's Native communities as ways to share cultural traditions with museum visitors and the general public and also as opportunities for Native people to teach themselves about their own cultures and empower their communities with a deeper sense of cultural heritage. Added space will enable the Pratt to offer these kinds of programs, which are deeply meaningful for the region's Native communities.

4. New Exhibits on Change

The fluid nature of the Pratt's Master Exhibit Plan allows the Museum to incorporate new exhibit themes as they emerge. Alaska is on the frontline of global warming, and environmental change is now one of the most profound forces influencing cultural traditions, communities, economies, and ecosystems in the region. Renovation of galleries will enable the Pratt to fulfill the final phase of its MEP and incorporate the important issues and stories that emerge from the community. Such exhibits will help our community and visitors understand, embrace, and respond to the dramatic changes happening around us.

CAPITAL PROJECT PLAN & TIMETABLE

With support from a grant of \$88,600 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Pratt is currently working with its community and stakeholders to develop a Concept Design for the building and site. To minimize impacts to our visitors, the project has been divided into two phases, so that at least a portion of the museum building and exhibits are accessible to visitors throughout the project. All aspects of the project will comply with Davis Bacon requirements, and while the Pratt is not a historic building,

we will be in compliance with Section 106 regulations. Phase I, which will include construction of the addition and site work, will take place in 2011. In 2012, Phase II work will include renovation of the existing museum building and installation of new exhibits. Grand opening is scheduled for summer 2013.

HUMANITIES AT THE PRATT MUSEUM

Collections

Working with the Curator of Collections, the community-based Collections Committee takes a leadership role in collections policies (see Collections Plan, attached), procedures, and other initiatives, and currently includes a former curator of American history, an oceanographer, and artists. The Pratt's comprehensive research collections of more than 18,000 objects represent the cultures and environment of the Kachemak Bay region. The well-documented humanities collections in anthropology, history, art, historical photographs, library, and archives constitute a valuable resource for research, exhibition, and educational use and represent 80% of the Pratt's collections. The Pratt is the only nationally-accredited museum and home to substantial collections in the 25,600 square mile region of the Kenai Peninsula (an area the size of West Virginia). The Pratt's collections have been used by numerous humanities scholars, including Dr. Alan Boraas, Professor of Anthropology, University of Alaska Anchorage; Dr. Susan Fair, Folklorist at the University of Arizona-Tucson, for her work on traditional Native land use; Janet Klein, historian and archaeologist, for her books, including *Kachemak Bay Communities: Their Histories, Their Mysteries* (2008), *Archaeology of Kachemak Bay* (1997), *History of Kachemak Bay: The Country, The Communities* (1981); and Susan Springer, author of *Seldovia, Alaska: An Historical Portrait of Life in Zaliv Seldevoe-Herring Bay* (1997). The Kachemak Bay region is just now beginning to receive scholarly attention and the history of the region has, as yet, gone largely unwritten. The Pratt's collections will continue to play a critical role in informing our understanding of the past, present, and future of the region.

History Collection

The History Collection of 3,700 objects reflects the Russian and American influences on the region. It includes tools needed for trapping, whaling, fishing, mining, fox farming, and agriculture; religious

memorabilia; and household items. The Pratt's collection includes the original Harrington Cabin, a small, spruce-sided cabin built in 1935 and moved to the Museum grounds in 1993. Museum visitors can enter the cabin, which is furnished by objects from the Joe Drew homesteading collection. This collection is one of the richest and most multi-faceted representations of pioneer life in the United States and Alaska in particular. It includes everything from diaries to the family Bible, photographs and a houseful of trunks containing the homesteading life of Joe Drew. The context of these in situ objects is deepened by their careful arrangement by original homesteaders Don Johnson and Wilma Williams. Unusual relics recovered in 2008 from Alaska's oldest shipwreck (1868) are destined for permanent exhibition at the Pratt, once preliminary conservation measures have been completed. A mountain Howitzer, a porthole, and cannon balls from the bark USS *Torrent* will serve as a reminder of the perils of settling the newly American Alaska in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The History Collection also includes maps, nautical charts, surveys, ephemera, oral history tapes, and films that document community development on the Kenai Peninsula. Objects represent the long history of a region known for its natural resources, from an 1897 letter to the Alaska Commercial Company bemoaning the falling prices of sea otter pelts to a 2008 lapel button opposing the building of the Pebble Mine, a proposed copper and gold mine in the Bristol Bay region. What makes many of the objects so unique is the full documentation that accompanies them; a homemade wooden potato shredder from the early 1900's is accompanied by differing written opinions on whether the maker (a well-known local) used the potato starch for his clothes or for vodka. These storied objects hold tremendous value as the emerging history of this area is slowly revealed.

Anthropology Collection

The Anthropology Collection of 3,700 objects represents Athabaskan, Eskimo, and Aleut cultures. They include well-documented archaeological materials excavated from seven local sites representing the earliest known inhabitants of Kachemak Bay, from Ocean Bay Culture 4500 years BP through Kachemak Tradition to prehistoric Dena'ina Athabaskans around 1400 AD. The Pratt Museum serves as the regional

repository for cultural materials of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, including repatriated counting cords; the Tribe's Russian River Collection includes 1,200 objects excavated in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service archaeologists from the confluence of the Russian and Kenai Rivers. What makes these net sinkers and projectile points such a vital part of the Pratt's collection is their connection to Native people who live in area villages. Unlike other archaeological collections that sit far removed from their original cultures, the Pratt's collections remain where they may be appreciated by the Dena'ina and Sugpiaq Alutiiq descendants of these original skilled hunters, fishers, and gatherers.

The cultural crossroads that is Kachemak Bay is also represented by ethnographic artifacts, such as basketry, dolls, fishing and hunting implements, watercraft, household tools, clothing, and ornamental pieces of regional Native Alaskan coastal cultures. One of the rarest pieces is a well-preserved Kachemak Tradition birch basket that somehow survived for a thousand years in a tide-swept cliff. In addition to local treasures, small but select comparative collections represent major Alaskan cultures from beyond this geographic focus. Highlights include a St. Lawrence Island feather parka made from tanned Pelagic Cormorant skins and an Eskimo walrus gut parka intricately decorated with hundreds of rare Crested Auklet feathers and bills. In the words of Michelle Ravenmoon, a Dena'ina Subsistence Coordinator for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, museums should be "places that help us remember"; this is the conceptual light that illuminates the formation of the Pratt Museum's Anthropology Collection. It is not a collection of exotic curios but an assemblage of ordinary and extraordinary objects that speak for the silent people who walked these beaches before us, telling us how they lived.

Art Collection

The Art Collection of 226 objects includes paintings, prints, photographs, textiles, and sculptures by regional artists which explore themes of people and place and represent subjects including Alaskan landscapes, people, animals, culture, work, and spirit. Others reflect the history and diversity of art in the community; though small, Homer may be considered the art capital of Alaska and was named by visual arts critic John Villani one of "the 100 Best Art Towns in America." Many prominent and emerging

Native artists, including Alvin Amason, Sonya Kelliher-Combs, Ron Senungetuk, and Susie Silook figure in the collection, as well as other Alaska artists, such as Alex Combs, Fran Reed, and David Rosenthal. Contemporary artwork is exhibited in the Pratt's Recent Acquisitions gallery, exposing visitors to the many and diverse visions Alaskans have of ourselves and our surroundings. Artwork is also interwoven throughout exhibits thematically, complementing their educational message with visual impact.

A collection of 21 homemade quilts is a perennial favorite for museum visitors; fourteen of these constitute a series of community-created quilts that integrate with the exhibits. Nearly three decades ago, volunteer quilt-makers started a special tradition of gathering annually to conceive, design, and fabricate a quilt to be raffled to benefit the Pratt Museum and its programs. Each year they focused on a clever and carefully researched local theme—wildflowers, historic buildings, Georg Wilhelm Steller's 1741 expedition to Alaska—and often a second quilt was made to be donated to the museum's permanent collection. The quilts celebrate the cultural and natural history of the region, and the assembly of people and material that produced them is testimony to the community fabric that supports the Museum. A catalogue of the quilt projects is currently in production.

Historical Photographs

The Photo Archives Collection is the most actively used collection at the Museum. The rich visual heritage of the Kenai Peninsula can be experienced through some 6,500 historical images documenting community development and Kachemak Bay from 1905 through the present. Since 2000, historical photographs have been viewed by visitors at an interactive kiosk within the museum, and the uses of this service have been as varied as the visitors themselves. They include Kenaitze Indian Tribe summer camp students searching for pictures of the old town of Kenai, a former homesteader locating the dimly-remembered cabin she had lived in during the 1940's, and a Seattle novelist viewing historic images of horses grazing on the Homer Spit, to help develop the central figures in a book. Community members have found pictures of the early settlers who built the homes they now live in, connecting them with the

history of this place. Local newspapers regularly use images from this collection to document changes within the community and to commemorate past events, e.g., the Good Friday Earthquake of 1964.

Library & Archives

The non-lending Library consists of museological, cultural, and natural history periodicals, 1,500 books, and a vertical file of scholarly papers. The library serves as a resource for staff and for visiting researchers. Books include Frederica De Laguna's *The Archaeology of Cook Inlet* (1934), the 1889 U.S. House of Representatives committee report *Investigation of the Fur Seal and Other Fisheries of Alaska*, and a 1907 edition of Robert Service's *Ballads of a Cheechako*. They document local and state history, regional industries, the natural environment, and creative work by local authors.

The Archives of 275 cubic feet preserve community history, business records and noncurrent collections documentation. They include the personal archives of homesteading families as well as a variety of facets of life on the Kenai Peninsula as reflected in records from the Homer Civic League, Homer Women's Club, the Wooden Boat Society, Homer Fisherman's Association, and other entities back to the 1920's. As the history of this area becomes more in demand, these archives will have inestimable value in reconstructing the lives and times of the area's pre-statehood settlers. One of the oldest documents in the collection is the 1898 Constitution and By-laws of the King's County Mining Company, which operated in Homer.

Natural History Collections

The natural history collections are made up of Earth Sciences Collections and Biology Collections. The Earth Sciences Collections of 500 geological and paleontological specimens include a rare fossil imprint of a local perch, bison and woolly mammoth fossils, glacial erratics carried to Homer beaches, and a valuable collection of fossil mollusks representing the diverse, prolific life of our ancient seas. Volcanic ash, pumice, and lava bombs represent regional volcanic activity. Minerals have long played a part in the development of the Kachemak Bay area; enormous deposits of coal attracted industry and settlement

sporadically from about 1890 through 1950, and the allure (but not the presence) of gold attracted ventures and investment at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Biology Collections consist of 2,500 regional specimens or units. The marine life collection represents a baseline study of marine plants and animals and drift/beach materials of Kachemak Bay. Thirty mounts of marine and freshwater fish feature locally common species, to aid in identification. Over 250 mounts, study skins, skeletons, and nests of birds represent many of the 487 species documented in Alaska. A collection of 30 salvaged marine mammals, prepared largely as articulated skeletons, is the highlight of a representative collection of over 500 mammal study skins, hides, mounts, and skeletons. A herbarium of 1,200 specimens represents 347 botanical species from around the bay. This richness in natural resources is the currency that has attracted people to Kachemak Bay over the millennia. Hunters, fishers, and gatherers have always lived off the land and sea here, and the Biology Collections serve as useful illustrations of the true wealth of the region.

Education Programs

Education program development and evaluation is led by the Director of Education with input from the community-based Education Program Advisory Committee that includes classroom teachers, field science educators, a home-school coordinator, an oceanographer, and a long-time museum docent. Underlying the Pratt's education programs is the notion that by exploring the humanities, arts, and sciences together we can better understand our communities, our environment, and ourselves. The region's schools, Native communities, families, and others institutions look to the Pratt to be a leader in informal educational programming. Programs are offered year-round, in the Museum and out of doors, and for the most part are free of charge. The Pratt leverages partnerships with University of Alaska Anchorage—Kenai Peninsula College, Lake Clark National Park & Preserve, Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Homer Council on the Arts, Bunnell Street Arts Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and others to expand the reach of its educational offerings.

School Programs & Educator Resources

In 2008, the Pratt served more than 62 school groups from 28 schools from Homer, across the Kenai Peninsula, as well as from the Anchorage region and across Alaska, from as far away as the Interior and the Aleutian Chain. Throughout the school year, students from pre-school through grade 12 experience staff-led and curriculum-based tours of the Museum. The Pratt works closely with teachers to design programs that meet students' and teachers' needs and augment classroom studies. Guided School Group Tours are available on a number of humanities topics, including homesteading experience & pioneer history, cultural history of Kachemak Bay, subsistence, mining history, and other topics. Employing exhibits and collections, Pratt staff help students explore the people and communities who call this region home, the ways humans and animals have survived, natural and man-made disasters that have impacted local people, and artistic interpretations of Kachemak Bay. In addition, Educational Resource Kits and a lending media library addressing numerous humanities disciplines are available at no cost to educators.

Youth Education Programs

In addition to school and group tours, the Pratt offers education programs to young people throughout the year that meet the region's varied educational needs. These programs introduce young people to anthropology, archaeology, natural history, pioneer history, artistic explorations of place, and other subjects. The Museum's summer and school-year programs offer hands-on explorations of the natural environment and human experience in the Kachemak Bay region. Programs include drop-in classes for pre-school, elementary, and middle school students, and extended internships for high school and college students. In addition, internships in field archaeological projects are offered to Native youth in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage.

Humanities Programs for the General Public

The Pratt offers varied informal learning opportunities for adults and the general public, including the biennial *Gathering of Native Tradition* (described above). In addition, the Pratt holds public forums facilitated by a Kenai Peninsula College humanities professor to discuss topics relevant to current

community concerns—e.g., Immigration, Erosion, and “Junk Matters.” And, the Pratt carefully selects a theme for an annual art/science collaboration that engages multiple disciplines, illuminates the human condition, and elicits intellectual and emotional responses. Past topics include the 20th anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, the human body, and owls. Multi-disciplinary workshops help participants explore the topic, and the collaboration culminates in an exhibit that incorporates visitors’ written responses.

Exhibits

The Exhibits Committee, with leadership from the Curator of Exhibits, guides development of new exhibits and exhibit policy and selects changing exhibits. The committee consists of the Alaska State Writer Laureate, a ceramics artist, a wildlife photographer, a painter, a former high school principal, educators, a marine biologist, and the director of interpretation and subsistence management programs for the National Park Service. In addition to the permanent exhibit, *Kachemak Bay: An Exploration of People and Place* described above, the Pratt shows six temporary exhibits each year, including thematic traveling exhibits, contemporary art, historical, and cultural exhibits curated by the Pratt or guest curators. Recent temporary exhibits include: *Sami: Reindeer Herders of Alaska*, which explored the influence of Scandinavian reindeer herders on northwestern Alaska’s Native people, curated by Sami scholars Faith Fjeld and Lois Stover; *Tradition, Inspiration, and Innovation: New Work from Alutiiq Artists*, a Pratt-curated exhibit that was the first in Alaska to bring together contemporary Alutiiq artists; *Making Ourselves At Home: Creating a Community on the Benchlands of Kachemak Bay*, an exhibit guest-curated by Homer historians that explored the pioneer experience in the Homer region; and *Always Getting Ready*, photographs of Yup’ik Eskimo life by James Barker paired with *Portrait of a Divided Maritime Family*, images of a Siberian Yup’ik family divided by the Cold War by L. Saunders McNeill.

The Pratt is one of the only small museums in Alaska with the capacity to curate traveling exhibits. In addition to *Darkened Waters: Portrait of an Oil Spill*, which toured to the Smithsonian Institution and elsewhere, more recent traveling exhibits curated by the Pratt include: *The Hunter and the Hunted*, an exploration of historic and contemporary Alutiiq seal hunting from the dual perspectives of hunter and

prey, which traveled to Native villages, and the new exhibit, *Chaqenq'a: Dena'ina Fish Camp*, created in partnership with Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and by participation from the Ninilchik Village Tribe, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, and the Native Village of Nondalton. This multimedia exhibit will travel to Anchorage to be exhibited at the new National Park Service headquarters.

MUSEUM CAPACITY

Governance and Personnel

The Pratt Museum's Board of Directors encompasses a representative cross-section of socio-economic backgrounds and a diversity of age, gender and ethnicity. The nine-member Board has strategic oversight of the Museum, its policies and programs, and deep engagement in the Museum's humanities programs. Board members engage with the community on many levels and represent local leaders in business, the arts, education, research, and social service organizations. Their service on other local, regional and national boards enhances the Museum's capacity to carry out its programs. The 15 staff members of the Pratt Museum represent a diversity of skills and accomplishments in the humanities. The majority of program directors have advanced degrees in anthropology and the arts, complemented by research and publication in the field of Native Alaskan culture. The staff has a long tradition of carrying out high-quality programs in the humanities and managing large federal grants.

Audience

The Pratt Museum's primary audience comes from the Kenai Peninsula, a population of 51,000, made up of Alaska Natives (primarily Dena'ina Athabaskan and Sugpiaq Alutiiq), Russian Old Believers, and a mix of more recent immigrants from the Lower 48, all of varied socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The Pratt also serves the 350,000 residents of the Anchorage area, more than half the state's population. Homer is a popular summer travel destination for Anchorage area residents, and during the school year, schools in the Anchorage region depend on Homer's coastal access for field trips to support classroom studies. Summer travelers are the Pratt's most numerous Museum visitors; they come from every state and an average of 40 foreign countries annually. The Museum also serves a substantial online audience,

and with website revisions—including access to collections and online exhibits planned in coordination with the Pratt’s capital project—the Museum anticipates an additional half million annual online visitors.

Community Involvement

Meaningful community collaboration is a hallmark of the Pratt Museum. Staff and Board members work with community members, including homesteaders, Alaska Natives, artists, and commercial fishermen on all major program, exhibit, and policy development initiatives. The Pratt’s community-based Collections Plan is used as a model by the Smithsonian Institution to guide community museums across the country, and the Pratt participated in the *Partnership for a Nation of Learners* 2003 Summit in Washington, D.C. to present a case study of high level community collaboration.

Facility & Site

Constructed in 1968, the Museum building was expanded in 1977, 1986 and 1991. The building now measures 10,000 square feet, including 740 square feet for collections, 4,270 square feet of galleries, and 2,050 square feet of support space. A 2007 professional assessment of the building revealed that the structure is fundamentally sound. Over the decades, the Pratt and its “friends” group—Patrons of the Pratt Society—have worked hard to secure surrounding parcels of land, and the Pratt now owns, debt-free, 9.3 acres of urban greenspace in the heart of Homer.

Partners

As a high caliber museum in a remote community, the Pratt depends on partners across the region, state, and country to reach ambitious goals. The Pratt is a member of Museums Alaska, a statewide organization representing Alaska’s 57 museums, and has had representation on the Museums Alaska Board of Directors since 2004. The Pratt is called upon frequently by member institutions for its policies as models. As one of only five museums accredited by the American Association of Museums in the state, the Pratt’s experience with mobilizing local volunteerism and attracting well-qualified staff to deliver

programs and services recognized at the national level is a strength the Museum is pleased to share with the growing community of geographically remote museums and cultural centers in Alaska.

The Pratt works closely with the Alaska Humanities Forum, the state's humanities council, and the Museum Director serves on the Forum's Board of Directors. Over the last 18 years, the Pratt has received some 20 competitive grants from the Forum to support exhibits, education programs, cultural events, oral history production, and community-based video development. The Forum has supported projects including: the development of *Chaqenq'a: Dena'ina Fish Camp*, as well as the creation of an oral history and video documentation of Homer homesteader and Interpretive Storyteller Jill Greer, who evocatively shares her own pioneer experience and interprets the Pratt's Historic Harrington Cabin exhibit. In addition, Alaska Humanities Forum support has helped the Pratt bring traveling exhibits to the Museum and maintain the ongoing Community Conversations program.

FUNDRAISING PLAN & LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

The Pratt is preparing to launch the silent phase of a Capital Campaign with an anticipated goal of \$12 million. The Pratt has full commitment and leadership from its Board of Directors and key staff as well as commitment from the Museum's friends group, Patrons of the Pratt Society (POPS). The Community Vision Committee of the Board has taken a primary leadership role in planning, and the Museum has hired a half-time Capital Campaign Manager who works closely with the Museum Director and Development Director. In Fall 2009, the Pratt will assemble the Campaign Committee—a group of Board members and skilled volunteers, and the Museum will identify and recruit Honorary Chairs whose name recognition, contacts, and financial resources will be tremendous assets to the Campaign. The Pratt has engaged planning and strategy assistance from The Foraker Group, an organization dedicated to enhancing the capacity of Alaska's nonprofits, and is contracting with Joy Atrops-Kimura, CFRE and Campaign Director for the Anchorage Museum's \$106 million expansion project, for consulting services. And the Pratt is working closely with the Rasmuson Foundation, Alaska's largest private foundation, as it takes these next steps. (See attached draft Capital Campaign Calendar.)

To prepare for the Campaign, in 2008, the Pratt entered a two-year capacity-building initiative funded by a grant of \$125,000 from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation to ramp up its development capacity. In addition, the Pratt was selected to participate in the Pre-Development Program operated by the Rasmuson Foundation, The Foraker Group, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and the Denali Commission. The program provides in-kind planning services for the Pratt's capital project, which will help us develop the Five-Year Campaign Fundraising Plan as well as the Business Plan for Sustainability, to be completed by August 2009. Through the Pre-Development program, we are also working with the McDowell Group, a research and consulting firm, to undertake a market and financial feasibility study for the campaign at no cost to the Pratt. A grant of \$88,600 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services is helping the Pratt work with its community and stakeholders—including Native communities, Russian Old Believer communities, regional educators and schools, and others—to plan the building and site improvements. This outreach will give the Pratt broad support for and investment in the capital project which the Pratt will leverage for the Campaign.

An NEH Challenge Grant will build tremendous momentum at the beginning of our campaign, providing extra incentive to donors that will be invaluable in the current economic climate. Already, the Pratt's friends group, POPS, has pledged to raised \$500,000 of matching support that references the Challenge grant. And the Pratt has in hand a leadership gift of \$104,000 that qualifies for the Challenge Grant match, which brings us 1/5 of the way towards a goal of \$500,000 of matching support from individuals. Supported by more than 550 members, including more than 60 individual donors who have invested in the Pratt for two decades or more, the Pratt will cultivate and solicit additional matching support from more than 200 individual donors, including 10 leadership gifts of \$50,000 or more, 36 major gifts of \$5,000 or greater, and 130 gifts from the community at large. We will seek \$400,000 of matching support combined from the State of Alaska and the City of Homer. We are working closely with our state legislators to secure state funds during the 2010 legislative session, and the Pratt's capital project has been included as a priority on the City of Homer's 2009 – 2014 Capital Improvement Program. A contribution

from the City will likely take the form of a multi-year pledge for funds that reference the Challenge Grant match beyond the City's traditional operating support. We will raise \$700,000 from foundations. Targeted funders include the Rasmuson Foundation, Carl E. Wynn Foundation, M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Kresge Foundation, Skaggs Foundation, and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. The Pratt is supported by 100 businesses and corporations and will solicit \$300,000 of matching gifts from existing supporters including BP, ConocoPhillips, Holland America Line, and Totem Ocean Trailer Express. We will leverage existing media relationships and the Museum's statewide stature to elevate public awareness and support of this project. Our donors respond to fundraising challenges, and an NEH Challenge Grant will inspire meaningful gifts from all parts of our donor base. Securing matching gifts will be the main effort of the initial phase of the Campaign, and the leverage of the Challenge Grant will illustrate to our funders the impact of their investments, critical during times of financial uncertainty.

A key goal of the Campaign is to broaden our donor base to support long-term financial sustainability. The NEH Challenge Grant will help us cultivate new donors and more deeply engage existing supporters by raising awareness of the Pratt's humanities programs and collections. This is the most ambitious institutional development project the Pratt Museum has undertaken in its history. We are confident we have the institutional resources and professional capacity to achieve the matching portion of the grant.

EVALUATION & IMPACT

Through the IMLS-funded project, "A Community Vision for a Community Museum," the Pratt is currently conducting front-end research to assess needs and expectations of Museum stakeholders and target audiences, which will inform capital project planning and program development. We are working with educators, Alaska Native groups, Russian Old Believers and others to ask: *What is your vision for the Museum? How can you be better served?* The results of these discussions continue to inform our plans. We have contracted with Wendy Meluch of Visitor Studies Services, the evaluator for Phase I exhibit development and implementation, to evaluate the community-based process of this front-end

research. We will engage Meluch again for summative evaluation to assess the impact of this grant on the Pratt's humanities capacity, which will be part of a comprehensive evaluation process that will gauge the impact of the Pratt's larger institutional development program. This summative evaluation will follow-up with stakeholders and audiences we are working with now to assess whether their needs and expectations are met. Quantitative methods will assess such factors as: 1) How has use of the Museum by certain target audiences—e.g. researchers, university students, Russian Old Believers—changed? 2) Do 80% or more of visitors feel they have learned something new in the humanities? 3) What primary and secondary (through publications, presentations, college classes, etc.) audiences are reached, and how many individuals does that represent? Qualitative analysis will evaluate the ways: 1) visitors and program participants feel inspired, represented, and invested in the Museum? 2) audiences evidence self reflection, relating new humanities information to their own lives? 3) collections, programs, and exhibits engender excitement and curiosity? We will use multiple methods as appropriate to our varied research questions and audiences in order to triangulate on our summative findings.

CONCLUSION

Always a community labor of love, the Pratt Museum has evolved from a volunteer, “shoestring” operation to a professionally accredited, national award-winning institution that serves tens of thousands of people each year. The powerful leverage of a Challenge Grant will further transform the Pratt, helping us engage broad audiences and support as we carry out the most important institutional development project the Museum has ever undertaken. NEH support will enable the Museum to become the nexus of intellectual engagement and dialogue for the expression of civic and cultural identity that is central to the Pratt's long-term vision. This support will help the Pratt build, preserve, and better understand its collections and share them through interpretive programs and exhibits, enriching public understanding of Kachemak Bay's past, present, and future. And this support will help the Pratt engage visitors and the community at large in examining self and place, which is at the heart of the Museum's ability to serve its community and visitors now and into the future.

BUDGET

No Prior NEH Challenge Grant

Total NEH funds requested: \$800,000

Year One (2010) \$100,000

Year Two (2011) \$200,000

Year Three (2012) \$400,000

Year Four (2013) \$100,000

Total nonfederal contributions \$2,400,000

Total Project Funds (NEH plus Match) \$3,200,000

Planned Expenditures:

Construction \$2,242,424

- Addition of 1,000 square foot education program space
- Renovation of galleries and collections storage, and creation of research and conservation laboratory

Design (12%) \$269,091

Permitting (3%) \$67,273

Project Management (5%) \$112,121

Project Contingency (12%) \$269,091

Collections Storage System \$240,000

- SpaceSaver storage system: 2324 Linear Filing Inches (LFI) storage capacity, mix of shelving and sealed museum cabinets by Delta Designs, Ltd.

Total **\$3,200,000**