



Sealaska Corporation Buys Land For Cultural Center
Center slated for downtown site razed by 2004 fire

Juneau, AK - Sealaska Corporation has purchased a downtown lot and plans to donate the site to the nonprofit Sealaska Heritage Institute for a planned Southeast Alaska Native Cultural and Visitors Center.

The lot, known locally as “the pit”, was the former site of the Skinner Building, which was destroyed by fire in 2004. The property, located across the street from Sealaska’s headquarters, was purchased from a private owner and will be turned over to the institute for a cultural center.

The center is a priority of Sealaska’s board of directors, said Chief Executive Officer Chris McNeil, noting that the hugely popular Celebration event showcases the cultures for a few days every other year, and the center would allow the cultures to be showcased year-round.

“We believe that we have an obligation to show our commitment to support this project and to enable SHI to secure additional funding for the project,” McNeil said. “This is a worthwhile project and a project of that nature merits that we make a significant contribution towards its fulfillment, and that’s what we’ve done.”

Sealaska Heritage Institute is very grateful to Sealaska’s board of directors for making the donation, said Marlene Johnson, a trustee of the institute.

“This donation is a huge step towards making the much needed cultural center a reality,” Johnson said.

As part of the purchase agreement, the current owner agreed to resolve issues related to damaged sidewalks on the perimeter of the lot before Sealaska officially takes ownership, likely by mid July.

“After the current owner fulfills his obligations, Sealaska Corporation plans to landscape the lot, so it’s attractive in the interim before ground is broken for the center;” said Executive Vice President Rick Harris.

The center will be a first-rate institution for the study of Native cultures, preservation of historical papers and ethnographic collections, and the cultivation of Native culture, arts and languages. The project will create more than 80 jobs during the two-year construction phase and generate millions of dollars in spending for payroll, benefits, and goods and services.

In 2010, the State of Alaska appropriated \$2 million to Sealaska Heritage Institute for the center. Those funds will be used for the planning phase of the facility. The institute has launched a fundraising effort to build the facility, which will cost an estimated \$16 million.

Sealaska Corporation founded Sealaska Heritage Institute in 1980 to administer its educational and cultural programs. Sealaska has continued to be the institute's largest sponsor. The institute is governed by an all-Native Board of Trustees and guided by a Council of Traditional Scholars. Its mission is to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures of Southeast Alaska.

Sealaska, a Growing Tradition

Sealaska has strengthened business with culture since 1972. We are a Native corporation owned by more than 20,000 tribal member shareholders and guided by our traditions of environmental stewardship and positively impacting our communities. Learn more at www.sealaska.com

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