



Museums Alaska - Alaska Art Fund 2022

Ketchikan Museums

Application

Primary Contact:

Phone:

Email:

## Narrative

Please answer the following questions to show the panel that your organization:

- Uses an unbiased, collaborative method of choosing or commissioning new pieces for your collection,
- Has a clear understanding on how the artwork will fit into and improve your collection and educational goals,
- Has done research into and feels that the price of the piece is fair, and
- Has a clear plan for how the artwork will be cared for and shared with the public.

TIP: Click on the question marks next to each section for guiding questions.

### **Briefly describe the artwork your organization would like to purchase.**

*(1500 character limit)*



Ketchikan Museums seeks to purchase "Killerwhale Spirit Button Robe Collar," by Janice L. Jackson (Aanchgwanutk'). The collar is a bold design modeled after button robes with formline applique. The collar is made of red wool felt with interfacing to give it shape and lined with fabric that has a totem pole design. It is embellished with black felt applique, sea otter fur trim, and large mother-of-pearl buttons along the edge. Smaller mother-of-pearl buttons, seed beads, and abalone shell buttons enhance the formline design. The brooch closure is a mother-of-pearl button decorated with red and black seed beads wrapped in mink fur.

Janice was gifted the Killer Whale design from her brother-in-law, master carver Norman Jackson also of Ketchikan, in February 2022. He made the design specifically for her to use with this collar. The Killer Whale is significant to Janice because it reflects her family's clan history, being of the Killer Whale Clan (Dakl'aweidí) from Klukwan.

Native Arts Studies Program (NASP) classes have been held at the Totem Heritage Center since 1976. Janice credits a recent class she taught and her family for inspiration behind creating the collar, "While teaching Beaded Hide Collars at the Totem Heritage Center this past spring, my students inspired me with their creativity so much that I made this collar after class." Janice began work on the collar in April 2022 and finished it in July 2022.

### **Tell us about the artist's background and experience.**

*(1500 character limit)*

Janice L. Jackson's parents were sent away to a boarding school and as a result, she grew up outside of her culture in Seattle. At the age of 11, her family relocated to Juneau where extended family taught her about her Tlingit heritage. Janice's great-grandmother, Mary Brown Bett, was a beaded moccasin maker and exposure to hides, furs, and beads at her home led Janice to learn beadwork in high school. Janice's grandfather, Justin



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Brown, encouraged Janice to be active in the culture whether through art or education. Janice's mother-in-law, Esther Shea, was a notable regalia maker and with her Janice learned to make vests and moccasins. Janice's mother, Gerry Brown, made graduation stoles which inspired Janice to make collars. Janice has learned from other gifted artists and elders including Esther Littlefield, Nathan Jackson, Ernest Smeltzer, Maria Miller, and Dorica Jackson.

Janice has been an instructor with NASP since 2008, teaching various types of regalia making. In 2019, Janice and her husband, Richard Jackson, started the Tongass Tlingit Cultural Heritage Institute, a non-profit organization revitalizing Tlingit heritage with youth activities and culture camps in the Ketchikan area. She is an active member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood.

In Sealaska Heritage Institute's eleventh biennial Juried Art Show and Competition in 2022, Janice's hide and fur collar, "Great Grandmother's Spirit" won Best of Division and Best of Skin & Fur in the Sewing Division.

#### **Why does your museum want to add this artwork to their collection?**



*(2500 character limit)*

The proposed acquisition fills a significant gap in the collection and fits strongly within our mission to "collect, preserve, interpret and creatively share the history and culture of our region to serve, educate, engage and enrich our community." Janice L. Jackson has had a long-standing and meaningful relationship with our organization and community. As mentioned elsewhere, Janice took inspiration for her collar from her tenure teaching in the Native Arts Studies Program. Her work is also enriched by her family connections. She is also an artist not currently represented in our collection.

Janice's collar is a contemporary fashion piece inspired by traditional regalia, representing the evolution of regalia. Collars are popular in Canada and gaining popularity in Alaska because of their practicality. Collars are easy to wear in comparison to heavy robes, tunics, or vests. They also provide relief when at events where the other forms of regalia can make the wearer hot and uncomfortable. Collars can be easily worn traveling or to non-ceremonial events where the wearer can still represent their culture in a more subtle way.

Much as Janice was inspired by her students, this piece will also inspire future NASP students. Items from our collection are shared with classes so that the students have local examples to learn from and to see techniques used from a variety of artists. This reinforces hands-on learning and continues the tradition of making regalia.

Most of the regalia in our collection was made through the NASP and largely consists of button robes, vests, tunics, and aprons. We have only one example of another form of neckwear, which is a gorget worn at the throat. There are no collars in the collection. There are few pieces of contemporary regalia in the collection, making this piece a meaningful addition to represent the continuum of tradition in modern times.



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### How did the artist price their artwork?

*(1500 character limit)*



The artist valued the collar at \$3,000. The cost includes both her labor and her brother-in-law Norman Jackson's time to create the Killer Whale design, as well as the cost of materials. The collar took approximately four months to make.

Sea otter fur is federally regulated. Alaska is one of the few places with a legal sea otter fur trade and only Alaska Natives are allowed to harvest them. Tanning pelts is expensive, usually costing around \$200 a pelt. The sea otter fur trim was ethically sourced from a pelt given to Janice by her father who is Alaska Native. Janice opted to use 100% wool felt over less expensive wool-blends because blends lose their shape over time and pill easily. The felt was approximately \$80 per yard. The larger mother-of-pearl buttons are another hard to find material and the ones Janice used to trim the collar have been with her for around 20 years. The mink fur used on the brooch was acquired through a material exchange between participants in the Native Arts Studies Program. The other fabric and notions were part of Janice's supply cache.

### What process did your museum use to find and choose this piece?

*(1500 character limit)*

Two processes were used in selecting the collar for organizational use. The collar is a featured item in the 2022-2023 Native Arts Studies Program Instructor Student display at the Totem Heritage Center. This is an annual rotating display that highlights work from the Native Arts Studies Program. Students can either submit their work from recent classes or be nominated. The Totem Heritage Center Advisory Committee then reviews the student submissions and makes recommendations for which instructors to feature. This year's display highlights regalia made in the past two years. Janice has taught regalia making classes in recent years and was an obvious instructor to highlight.

Once the grant program opened, the Acquisition Review Committee met to discuss artists not represented in the collection and artwork we would like to seek. The Committee uses a rubric to determine which items to pursue, including questions like:

- Does the artwork meet our mission?
- Was/is the artist a Ketchikan area resident?
- Has the artist taught, influenced, or mentored other artists?
- Does the artist have any connections with our organization?
- What is the story and artistic merit of the artwork?
- Is the artist or artwork already represented in the collection?
- Can we properly care for the artwork?



The collar came to our organization as a loan in September 2022. While the loan was being processed, we consulted with the artist to see if she was open to the idea of us applying for the grant.



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**Where will your museum store or display this piece and how will you protect it from the elements?** 

*(1500 character limit)*

The collar is on exhibit at the Totem Heritage Center in the new Instructor Student display, which opened October 20, 2022. The collar is displayed on a mannequin torso form within a large, enclosed exhibit case. It will be on display until September 2023. The collar is being considered for future display in the core exhibit, "Ketchikan Is..." at the Tongass Historical Museum. The collar would be featured in a case depicting social activities. We periodically rotate textiles to minimize light damage. The collar could be swapped out with another piece of regalia to allow the piece that is currently on display time to rest in storage.

When the collar is in storage, it will be stored flat in a textile cabinet with other artifacts made of or with fur. It will be important to store the collar flat with nothing stacked on top of it to avoid crushing the fur.

**How will your museum share this piece with the public?**

*(1500 character limit)*

As previously mentioned, the collar will be on exhibit at the Totem Heritage Center in the Instructor Student display through September 2023. The collar will be featured in advertising for the new display. Pending grant funding, we would announce the acquisition in our regular public outreach including social media, a monthly email newsletter, and print newsletter as well as with local print and radio media. The collar would also be featured as an Artifact of the Month. The collar's catalog record would be made available in the PastPerfect Online database on our website, [www.KetchikanMuseums.org](http://www.KetchikanMuseums.org).

**Is there anything else the review committee needs to know about your application?**

*(1500 character limit)*

The artist named the piece with Killerwhale as one word. Throughout the application when not using the title, Killer Whale is two words.

Janice L. Jackson is slated to teach two classes in the upcoming NASP schedule, a beaded applique workshop and a youth regalia class to make tunics. Both classes are in the spring of 2023.

Ketchikan Museums has also provided an update to Museums Alaska's director regarding an open commission from the fall 2021 AAF grant cycle. With her encouragement, we are applying for this grant.

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