ALASKA'S CREATIVE VITALITY 2009

ADAK AFOGNAK AKHIOK AKIACHAK AKIAK AKUTAN ALAKANUK ALATNA ALCAN BORDER ALEKNAGIK ALENEVA ALLAKAKET ALPINE ANAKTUVUK PASS ANCHOR POINT ANCHORAGE ANDERSON ANGOON ANIAK ANVIK ARCTIC VILLAGE ATKA ATMAUTLUAK ATQASUK ATTU STATION BARROW BEAR CREEK BEAVER BELKOFSKI BELUGA BETHEL BETTLES BIG DELTA BIG LAKE BILL MOORE'S SLOUGH BIRCH CREEK BREVIG MISSION BUCKLAND BUFFALO SOAPSTONE BUTTE CANTWELL CENTRAL CHALKYITSIK CHASE CHEFORNAK CHENEGA BAY CHEVAK CHICKALOON CHICKEN CHIGNIK CHIGNIK LAGOON CHIGNIK LAKE CHINIAK CHISANA CHISTOCHINA CHITINA CHUATHBALUK CHULOONAWICK CIRCLE CLAM GULCH CLARK'S POINT COFFMAN COVE COHOE COLD BAY COLDFOOT COLLEGE COOPER LANDING COPPER CENTER COPPERVILLE CORDOVA COUNCIL COVENANT LIFE CRAIG CROOKED CREEK CROWN POINT CUBE COVE DEERING DELTA JUNCTION DELTANA DIAMOND RIDGE DILLINGHAM DIOMEDE EAGLE EEK EGEGIK EIELSON AFB EKUK EKWOK ELFIN COVE ELMONAK FARM LOOP FERRY FISHHOOK FLAT FORT GAKONA GALENA GAMBELL GAME CREEK GATEWAY GEORGETOWN GLACIER VIEW GOLOVIN GOODNEWS BAY GRAYLING GULKANA GUSTAVUS HAINES HAINES BOROUGH HALIBUT COVE HARDING-BIRCH LAKES HEALY HEALY LAKE HOBART BAY HOLY CROSS HOONAH HOOPER BAY HOPE HOUSTON HUGHES HUSLIA HYDABURG HYDER IGIUGIG ILIAMNA IVANOF BAY JUNEAU KALIFORNSKY KALTAG KANATAK KARLUK KASAAN KASIGLUK KASILOF KENAI KETCHIKAN KING COVE KING ISLAND KING SALMON KIPNUK KIVALINA KLAWOCK KLUKWAN KNIK RIVER KNIK-FAIRVIEW KOBUK KODIAK KODIAK STATION KOKHANOK KOLIGANEK KONGIGANAK KOTLIK KOTZEBUE KOYUK KOYUKUK KUPREANOF KWETHLUK KWIGILLINGOK LAKE LOUISE LAKE MINCHUMINA LAKES LARSEN BAY LAKE MONTANA LEVELOCK LIVENGOOD LOWELL POINT LOWER KALSKAG LUTAK MANLEY HOT SPRINGS MANOKOTAK MARSHALL MARY'S IGLOO MCARTHY MCGRATH MCKINLEY PARK MEADOW LAKES MEKORYUK MENDELTNA MENTASTA LAKE MINTO MOOSE PASS MOSQUITO LAKE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE MUD BAY NAKNEK NANWALEK NAPAIMUTE NAPAKIAK NAPASKIAK NAUKATI BAY NELCHINA NELSON LAGOON NENANA NEW ALLAKAKET NEW STUYAHOK NEWHALEN NEWTOK NIGHTMUTE NIKISKI NIKOLAEVSK NIKOLAI NIKOLSKI NINILCHIK NOATAK NOME NONDALTON NOORVIK NORTH POLE NORTHWAY NORTHWAY VILLAGE NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH NUIQSUT NULATO NUNAM IQUA NUNAPITCHUK OHOGAMIUT OLD HARBOR OSCARVILLE OUZINKIE PAIMIUT PALMER PAULOFF HARBOR PAXSON PEDRO BAY PELICAN PERRYVILLE PETERSBURG PETERSVILLE PILOT POINT PILOT STATION PITKAS POINT PLATINUM PLEASANT VALLEY POINT BAKER POINT HOPE POINT LAY POINT MACKENZIE POPE-VANNOY LANDING PORT ALEXANDER PORT ALSWORTH PORT CLARENCE PORT GRAHAM PORT HEIDEN PORT LIONS PORT PROTECTION PORT WILLIAM PORTAGE CREEK PRIMROSE PRUDHOE BAY QUINHAGAK RAMPART RED DEVIL RED DOG MINE RIDGEWAY RUBY RUSSIAN MISSION SAINT GEORGE SAINT MARY'S SAINT MICHAEL SAINT PAUL SALAMATOF SALCHA SAND POINT SAVOONGA SAXMAN SCAMMON BAY SELAWIK SELDOVIA SELDOVIA VILLAGE SEWARD SHAGELUK SHAKTOOLIK SHEMYA STATION SHISHMAREF SHUNGNAK SILVER SPRINGS SITKA SKAGWAY SKWENTNA SLANA SLEETMUTE SOLDOTNA SOLOMON SOUTH NAKNEK STEBBINS STERLING STEVENS VILLAGE STONY RIVER SUNRISE SUSITNA SUTTON-ALPINE TAKOTNA TALKEETNA TANACROSS TANAINA TANANA TATITLEK TAZLINA TELIDA TELLER TENAKEE SPRINGS TETLIN THORNE BAY TOGIAK TOK TOKSOOK BAY TOLSONA TONSINA TRAPPER CREEK TULUKSAK TUNTUTULIAK TUNUNAK TWIN HILLS TWO RIVERS TYONEK UGASHIK UMKUMIUTE UNALAKLEET UNALASKA UNGA UPPER KALSKAG VALDEZ VENETIE VOZNESENKA WAINWRIGHT WALES WASILLA WHALE PASS WHITE MOUNTAIN WHITESTONE WHITESTONE LOGGING CAMP WHITTIER WILLOW WILLOW CREEK WISEMAN WOMENS BAY WOODY ISLAND WRANGELL Y YAKUTAT

ALASKA STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

INTRODUCING ALASKA'S CREATIVE VITALITY INDEX

I'd like to introduce you to the Creative Vitality Index, a new methodology for measuring the creative industries in Alaska.

For quite some time, the Alaska State Council on the Arts has been looking for a way to get a accurate snapshot of arts and cultural activity in the state. There are economic impact reports that demonstrate the nonprofit arts sector, but we felt it is important to include for profit companies as well as employment figures. We also wanted to answer some questions: How creative is Alaska? How can we measure our creative economy? Is there a method that we can use to annually take the pulse of arts and culture in our state? We think that the Creative Vitality Index (CVI) will help us answer many of those questions.

From Old Harbor Books in Sitka to the Museum of the North in Fairbanks, the CVI measures employment, income and community participation in the arts. From a variety of statistical sources, it brings the numbers down to a single index and compares it with the national average, similar to the Consumer Price Index or the Dow Jones Indexes. It utilizes relatively inexpensive employment and community participation data to illustrate the health of Alaska's creative economy.

This concept was developed by the Washington State Arts Commission, where it has been used for a number of years. Recently other states, including Oregon, have begun to use this tool to take the annual temperature of arts and culture activity.

But we can all only digest so much data. That's why, each year for this report, we will be including selected stories about the people that make up these numbers. It's important for each of us to know that we're not just talking about the economy, we're talking about artists, writers, actors, editors, composers, architects, photographers, set designers – the critical human components that make up the numbers.

We'll be gathering more stories as we go, and we hope that you enjoy them, as well as the insights into our state that the Creative Vitality Index provides.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Fox, Executive Director

What is the Creative Vitality Index?

The Creative Vitality Index is an annual measure of the health of the arts-related creative economy in a community, state or other geographic area compared to the national index, and creates a benchmark for future measurement. The index has two major components: the seven indicators of community participation in the arts, and the concentrations of arts-related employment.

Why a Creative Vitality Index?

For many years now, the non-profit arts community has used economic impact studies to position the arts in the broader economic development conversation. Economic impact studies measure and report on the size of the non-profit art sector's economic dimensions and growth over time. While the non-profit-arts-based economic impact study remains a useful tool, thinking has shifted to a more sophisticated understanding of the role the non-profit arts play in an economy. This new thinking places non-profit arts as one of many elements in a creative economy that includes the arts and creativity based for-profit sector. This expanded concept of how the arts fit into a larger economic system requires a new approach to measurement.

What does the Creative Vitality Index measure?

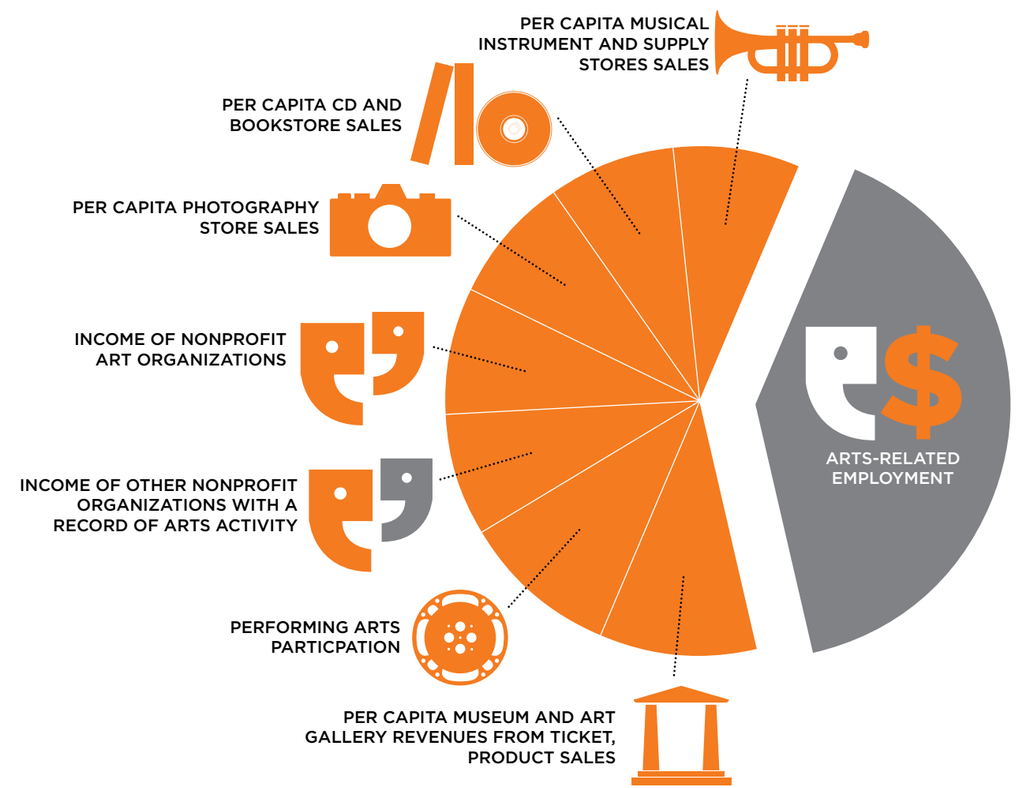
The CVI measure areas in both the for-profit and non-profit arts sectors. The CVI remains an arts-based tool and thus does not include measure of broader creative economy activities such as work in the field of technology. The CVI also does not measure the work of non-arts-based cultural entities like history and science museums. It does, however, include the arts activities of these institutions. This chart illustrates what is covered by the CVI and how each is weighted in the overall index.

A More Inclusive Tool

Because the creative economy includes activities like music and book store sales, attendance at movie theaters and gallery sales, The Creative Vitality Index (the CVI) uses streams of existing data to measure the annual changes in the economic health of various segments of the arts-related creative economy. Utilizing streams of data from both the for-profit and non-profit sectors, the system aggregates the data into a single index number that reflects the relative economic health of a geographic area's creative economy. The CVI provides an easily understandable measure of economic health—or lack thereof. It allows for year-to-year comparison, and cross-city and state comparison. The system also provides users with a series of reports on the rise and fall of key data factors measured by the index. Thus the CVI is more than an annual tally of what is often inflation-driven growth in the non-profit art sector. Instead, it is a more inclusive reporting mechanism that is rooted in robust data streams that reflect the entire arts-based creative economy.

60% SEVEN INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS.

40% ARTS-RELATED EMPLOYMENT IN MORE THAN 30 PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES.



Occupations Measured in the CVI

Actors, Producers and Directors
Advertising, Promotions Managers
Agents, Business Managers**
Announcers
Architects, Landscape Architects
Architecture Teachers*
Art, Drama, Music Teachers*
Art Directors
Audio, Video Equipment Technicians
Broadcast, Sound Technicians
Camera Operators, TV, Video, Movies
Commercial, Industrial Designers
Dancers, Choreographers
Directors, Religious Activities, Education
Editors
English Language, Literature Teachers*
Fashion, Floral Designers
Film, Video Editors
Fine Artists
Graphic, Interior Designers
Librarians
Media Equipment Workers
Multimedia Artists and Animators
Music Directors, Composers
Musical Instrument Repairers, Tuners
Musicians, Singers
Other Art, Design Workers
Other Media, Communications Workers
Photographers
Public Relations Managers
Public Relations Specialists
Set, Exhibit Designers
Technical Writers
Writers and Authors

* Post-secondary
** of Artists, Performer, Athletes

Where does this information come from?

Index data streams are analyzed by the Western States Arts Federation and taken from two major data partners: the Urban Institute's National Center for Charitable Statistics and Economic Modeling Specialists.

The Creative Vitality Index comprises data that were selected for four core reasons:

1) they are pre-existing and do not require the collection of additional data;
2) they are available in the form of annual updates;
3) they can be easily compared across states and in regions within states; and
4) experts have determined that they are reliable.

The participation indicators include items such as "income of nonprofit organizations," which incorporates contributions and tickets, reflecting participation. Other indicators are per-capita sales of musical instruments and music supply stores. Because both professional and amateur musicians buy from these stores, the sales data capture the expenditures of similar yet diverse customers, including high school students, members of garage bands, and professional jazz musicians. Traditional economic impact studies do not include this type of information. The second data stream in the index measures arts-related employment. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics provides a framework for states to conduct surveys that count and categorize individuals into occupational categories, including those related to the creative economy. The occupational detail is reported according to Workforce Development Areas which are artificial but often geographically rational segmentations of a state. Like the measure of participation, the jobs included in the Creative Vitality Index were selected to represent key work activities in the creative economy.

What the Creative Vitality Index does and doesn't measure

The Creative Vitality Index is an economic index, not an measure of raw creativity. The Creative Vitality Index captures the economic dimension of creative activity in an economy, not the creative potential of individuals. The Creative Vitality Index does not measure economic activity in the area of the technology sector.

The Creative Vitality Index also does not measure self- employment or online transactions *(i.e. purchasing music or books online)*. Regular collection of this data simply does not occur. Since this information is not collected in other states where the Creative Vitality Index has been implemented, it does not put Alaska at a disadvantage – we are comparing apples to apples, not apples to oranges.

The Creative Vitality Index favors participation and employment in the nonprofit arts. Defining the creative sector as a continuum that ranges from the nonprofit arts through related for-profit activities, the index seeks to capture a wide range of arts-related activities.

The Creative Vitality Index can be used as a tool for comparison; however, its greatest power is its ability to inform a self-diagnosis process, and contribute to the design of an improvement plan.

A state or community's index rating should be understood in the context of an economy's size and trading position. For example, a community with a relatively small population that is not a trading center may continually have a relatively modest Creative Vitality Index rating. It may need to grow in dif erent ways to even have the potential to expand its Creative Vitality Index.

What is an index?

An index is a statistical term that means a "quantity whose variation over a period of time measures the change in some phenomenon." Indexes draw from multiple sources of data that represent the "phenomenon." The most well-known examples of indexes are the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the Consumer Price Index and the Index of Leading Economic Indicators, which measure the health of our economy.

Is it an economic impact study?

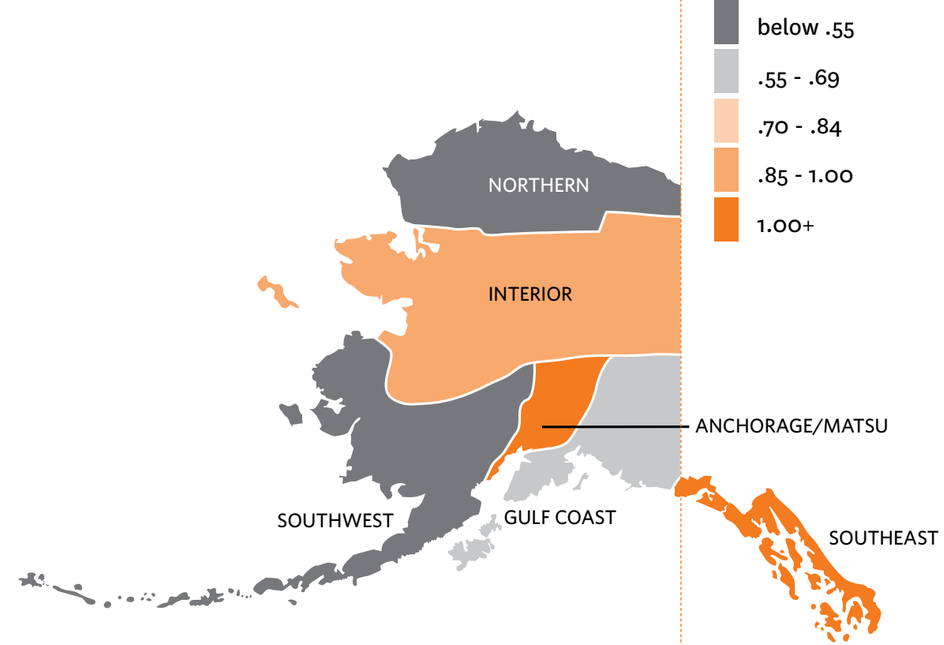
No. Indexes that measure creativity and arts economic impact studies both address the need to confirm the positive and contributing role of the arts in an economy. However, traditional economic impact studies only focus on the number of people employed in the nonprofit arts sector, direct and indirect spending related to the arts, and the multiplier ef ect on community impact (e.g., money spent on restaurants and hotels).

The Creative Vitality Index moves beyond this model and seeks to:

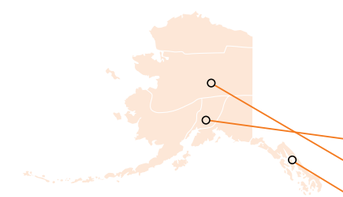
1) define the nonprofit arts as part of a variety of interrelated creative activities that begin with the nonprofit arts and extend to the for- profit arts; and

2) provide an estimate of the relative health of the creative economy in an area.

While figures from one or two years can show us where we stand relative to the national baseline, the true application of the Creative Vitality Index is in reflecting change from year to year in a given study area. Over the coming years, the index will serve as a tool to track the evolution of Alaska's creative sector and help maintain its strength and liveliness.



REGIONS	2008
Anchorage/MatSu	1.16
Gulf Coast Region	.69
Interior Region	.86
Northern Region	.54
Southeast Region	1.07
Southwest Region	.37
STATE OF ALASKA	**.98**



BOROUGH	2008
Anchorage Borough	1.37
North Star Borough	.92
Juneau Borough	1.16
EXTRACTED URBAN REGIONS	**1.24**

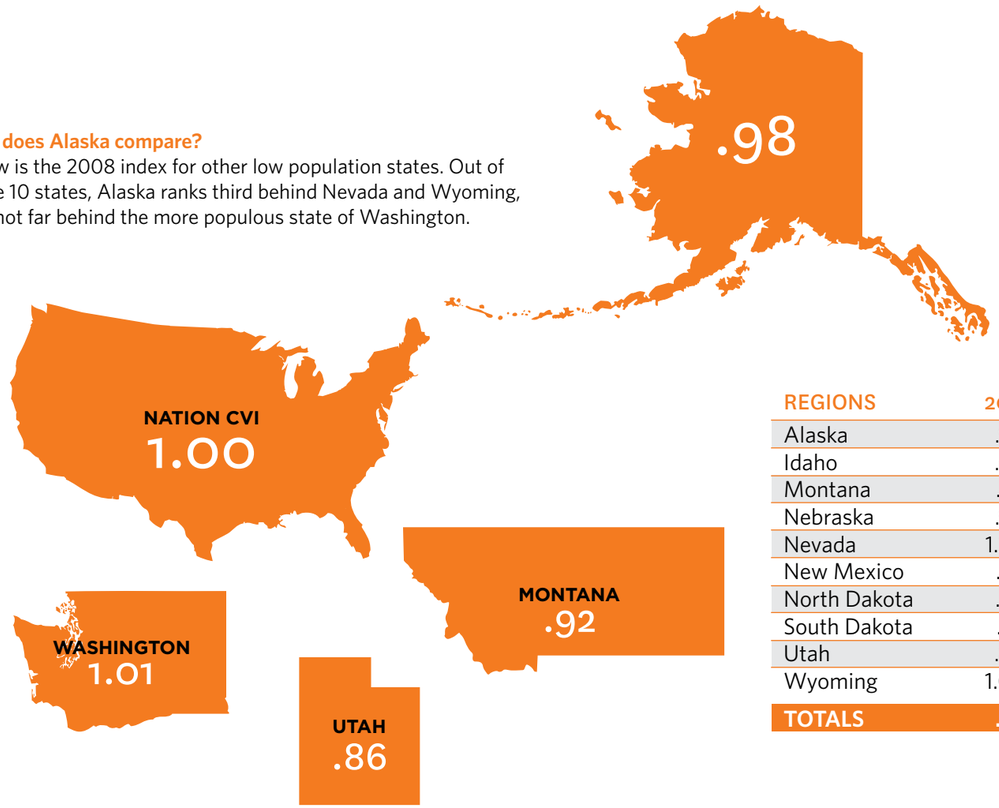
Alaska's creative economy

Alaska, with an index of .98 in 2008, was just slightly below the national index of 1.0. This is good news, given the far flung nature of our state and the knowledge that in so many rural villages, there is little commercial arts and culture activity. In calculating this index, some interesting statistics emerged: Statewide nonprofit arts organization revenues were calculated at over $23 million. A majority of these were in Anchorage, with $15 million in revenues. Arts-active organizations *(including tribal, cultural and historic organizations)* are extremely high, with over $87 million in revenues, translating to an index of 2.42. Book and record store sales are also above the national index, coming in at 1.01; Anchorage's CVI was 1.37, and was above the national average for all indicators except for art gallery, individual artist sales and performing arts participation.

Source: WESTAF

How does Alaska compare?

Below is the 2008 index for other low population states. Out of these 10 states, Alaska ranks third behind Nevada and Wyoming, and not far behind the more populous state of Washington.



REGIONS	2008
Alaska	.98
Idaho	.66
Montana	.92
Nebraska	.96
Nevada	1.20
New Mexico	.92
North Dakota	.83
South Dakota	.73
Utah	.86
Wyoming	1.04
TOTALS	**.93**

How can the Creative Vitality Index be used in my community?

The Creative Vitality Index can inform the public policy decision-making process and support advocates who seek to further develop the creative economy. Having established a baseline with the 2008 Creative Vitality Index, a community can see improvements, or declines, from year to year and encourage policy changes in the appropriate areas.

Other uses include:

- Calling attention to and educating the community at large on the varied components of the creative economy.
- Promoting the concept that the creative economy includes both for-profit and nonprofit arts-related activities.
- Bringing attention to significant changes in the creative economy ecosystem. For example, if contributions from private foundations drop substantially in a year and three local theater groups close their doors, it's time for action.
- Acting as a framework upon which to define and build a coalition to support and expand the creative economy.
- Serving as a tool to annually measure changes in the creative economy.

The complete 2008 Alaska Creative Vitality Index Report is available by contacting the Alaska State Council on the Arts, at 907-269-6610.

PETER BRONDZ STUDIO

IN A STUDIO ON A QUIET ROAD ABOUT A HALF HOUR FROM ANCHORAGE, A POTTER'S WHEEL SITS BY A WINDOW LOOKING OUT OVER TREES.

Peter Brondz calls the the wheel and room his workplace. A production potter for over three decades, he lives in the house behind the studio and sells pottery on site.

On an outside wall by the gallery door, a sign says, "Please remove your ice cleats here. Thank you! Thank you!" Inside, the narrow gallery smells like wood chips. Shelves hold bowls and plates, butter dishes and cups, mugs and pitchers, vases and sugar bowls, platters and sculptures. Unglazed pots rest on racks in the adjoining studio, a spacious room with a few counters and tables, and plenty of floor space. Upstairs, there's a guest room.

Outside, the place looks like an outdoorsman's compound with gear and once useful debris waiting for its next incarnation. Next to the driveway, a hand-built wood-fired kiln sits under a high, primitive carport roof, along with a beat-up truck. On one side, a stack of Sitka spruce; on the other, a rack of sea kayaks.

When Brondz fires up the kiln, the fury of wood ash and flames imbues the pots with brown and speckled hues, the colors of stones and spices. Finished vessels appear everywhere – on shelves and outside beams, along a porch and in the woods, and even as rejected shards at the base of a tree.

At first, making a living and a home in Bird Creek was just a matter of finding a rental place and knowing "there was a high-fire kiln in the neighborhood I could use," said Brondz.

Now people flock to his studio during firings and annual sales. If Brondz is busy or out of the studio, you just find what you want, and leave the price sticker and payment behind.

Year after year, pots get made and sold, friendships formed and sealed. Sometimes a neighbor drops by to pick up a parcel. Sometimes a friend stops by to say hello. Sometimes a customer dashes in to pick up a mug, some bowls, a gift. It takes just minutes to jog to the highway, but the road seems miles away.

"The serenity of looking out into a big spruce forest is really important to me. It influences how I work and think. Looking into someone's kitchen window wouldn't work for me."

- **PETER BRONDZ**
CLAY ARTIST

BIRD CREEK

WM SPEAR DESIGN MAKES TWO THINGS CLEAR ON ITS WEB SITE – THAT THE COMPANY MAKES "THE WORLD'S MOST WONDERFUL ENAMELS" AND THAT "WE DON'T WATER THE WHISKY."

Photo courtesy of William Spear.

"They said it was too far from markets, no infrastructure, labor too expensive, the weather too bad, seasonal blah blah blah. I thought I would spend a year or two proving them wrong."

— **WILLIAM SPEAR**
FOUNDER AND DESIGNER
WS SPEAR DESIGN

Integrity matters to the Nebraska-born entrepreneur and designer William Spear. An honest work ethic, along with a sense of humor and resilience, helped him get his Juneau pin company up and thriving. A former lawyer, banker and government worker, he got sick of hearing "no" and "no way."

"After four years of working in venture capital and four years at the Department of Labor, I had been inundated constantly by experts from universities and other places who said it was impossible to do business in Alaska, except for extracting resources," said Spear.

What started out as defiance turned into art making that straddles the line between production work and creativity, the working class and fine art, accessory and collectible. In some ways, Wm Spear defies categorization. Though the company produces old-school enamel pins, Spear conceived it as a Web-based operation selling well-crafted products with thoughtful, clever, sometimes quirky designs. That was over 25 years ago.

"We had one of the first fax machines in town," he said, "and one of the first laser printers, computers and Web sites. The whole world, for better or worse, has followed this same pattern."

Indeed, the company's online presence mimics the humor and irreverence of the products themselves. In the "About Us" page, the first paragraph gives visitors the option of skipping the soap opera and diving right into a Spear tutorial on good design, including examples such as the St. Lawrence River Skif , the Land Rover and the American Bantam.

Spear strives for the same attention to looks and performance in his pins. Though without formal art training, Spear has always drawn and painted, and initially made pins like little paintings. "No one could figure out what I was doing because to them it looked like I was just wandering around town selling pins out of my pocket in bars like pencils or something."

JUNEAU

The Wm Spear store in Juneau sells hard fired enamel products like this motel whiskey pin. Other designs include a bird series and a body part collection.

Eventually, the pins got picked up at the Nature Company and Natural Wonders, both closed now, as well as in catalogs like Coldwater Creek and Orvis. At one point, Spear got other artists involved and sold them to art museums like the Guggenheim and Smithsonian, but contemporary art sales were slow. Now, Spear does all the design work while his wife Susan handles operations. Low overhead and personnel were integral to the original business plan.

The company's products range from a cochlea pin and motel whiskey zipper pull to designs of a dachshund, Holstein cow and amanita mushroom. There's a Manhattan pin – the drink – and another of a DNA double helix, not to mention travel, insect, Alaska animal and baby Buddha pins, plus political missives and a human body series that includes a tooth, liver, intestine, eyeball and cross section of the epidermis.

No spleens yet, but he's open to the idea.

"I think most of our customers are buying talismans rather than art," he said, "but still, there is an irrational emotional pull even then that's some kind of art even if dismissed as folk art. Really, the art is primarily found in the whole body of work, millions of little seeds dispersed world wide with a life of at least 4,000 years each."

The craft of making enamels is dying quickly, he said, and the number of places producing hard fired enamel work has dwindled to maybe ten in China, where he sends his designs for production. The pins consist of a copper base with glass enamels colored by metal oxides. The glazes are added one at a time by hand and then fired separately, making the process time-consuming and labor intensive. Some of Spear's designs require 13 glazes. All the pins get electroplated in gold.

They sell for $8 to $18 retail in the Juneau shop or online, but Wm Spear sells wholesale and does commissions as well. "Our pins are inexpensive but sophisticated and are aimed at a small percentage of the top one percent of consumers," said Spear. "We are the least expensive thing and one of the few outside products in Patagonia stores, for instance."

Running the Juneau store helps him understand his market. "Mainly it allows me to see who my customers are and why they buy what they do," he said. "Our customers really are our sales reps, and in some ways it is almost like a cult."

Though all small businesses teeter on the brink of decline, something always saves Wm Spear Design, like when zipper pulls invigorated sales. "If retail is down because of a decline in tourism, maybe we get more commission work that year," he said, "and if wholesale is down, maybe we do better on the web. You have to stay on top of things and guard against stagnation. No matter how many designs you have, everyone wants something new."

Yet, Spear never intended for his business to conquer the world or last forever. He always anticipated a natural end to his line of pins and an increase in value as they became more rare. Already, Spear pins show up on eBay, as in recent auctions for a 1988 calico cat pin and a butterfly brooch from the same year.

Timelessness means more than fads, he said, so his salmon look like salmon, his humming birds like humming birds, and most of his pins would be recognizable 100, even 1,000 years from now.

"We keep expanding the line, but everyone knows what to expect," said Spear.

"It's extremely gratifying to see a lot of stylish 20-something women wearing our pins, or 10-year-old kids coming in and just loving the designs." **WILLIAM SPEAR,** FOUNDER AND DESIGNER, WS SPEAR DESIGN

FAIRBANKS ARTS FESTIVAL

FEW FAIRBANKSIANS KNEW THEY NEEDED AN ARTS FESTIVAL BACK IN THE 1980S. NOT THE JAZZ MUSICIANS OR POETS. NOT THE PAINTERS OR VIOLINISTS. DEFINITELY NOT THE YOGA PRACTITIONERS.

BUT JO RYMAN SCOTT KNEW WHAT FAIRBANKS NEEDED. HER VISION TOOK ROOT IN THE 1950s AND BLOOMED WITH THE CITY'S FIRST JAZZ FESTIVAL IN 1980. OVER THE NEXT THREE DECADES, THE FAIRBANKS SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL EMBRACED CREATIVE FIELDS AS VARIED AS POETRY, STEEL DRUMS, AND THE HEALING ARTS.

Fairbanks Arts Festival photos © Todd Paris

"People thought I was crazy. They said that Alaskans wouldn't want to pay to go to a festival in the summer because they just wanted to go camping."

— **JO RYMAN SCOTT**
FOUNDER OF FAIRBANKS ARTS FESTIVAL

Naysayers clearly missed the Fairbanks vibe, because Scott and co-founder Edward Madden of Boston capitalized on the city's late-evening sun by putting on a one-week jazz festival in April of 1980, funded in part by a $7,000 grant from the National Endowment on the Arts and a guarantor-ship from the Kiwanis Club of Fairbanks, not to mention a slew of local donations. The following year, classical musicians joined in as well.

FAIRBANKS

"I initially thought about having a jazz and classical music festival with dance and visual arts, and I called it 'Jazz to Classics,'" said Scott. "That was 30 years ago and people thought it was crazy, even sinful to put jazz and classics together."

What would those people think about including roots music, swing dance and tai chi? By the third year, participants could sign up for workshops, classes and performances in dance, opera, theater, musical theater and visual arts. Ice skating found its festival niche in 1990 and, later, creative writing and the healing arts joined in, along with musical specialties like accordion, blue grass, Irish fiddle, and harp.

Scott always kept her mind and options open by responding to what the community wanted to see, do, hear and experience. Adding so many creative fields only broadened the festival's audience and secured its place in the city's summer schedule.

Classical music and jazz continue to dominate the event, but the music program encompasses varied styles like gospel, blues and folk. Winter events like cabaret, gospel concerts and singing workshops build on the festival's momentum all year. Almost 1,000 people participated as registrants in the summer of 2009 and another 100 people volunteered, not to mention the nearly 100 artists from throughout the country who conducted 125 workshops in specialties like strings, woodwinds, brass, modern dance, Shakespeare and more, with nearly 45 performances staged in two weeks.

Even Scott never imagined how her dream would evolve. Now retired as the festival's director, she stays active as an advisor while finding time to do things she loves, like gardening, playing the piano, holding dinner parties and hosting concerts at her home. Kaptur met Scott 34 years ago in a University of Alaska Fairbanks pottery class. She formerly worked as executive director for the Fort Collins Symphony and National Repertory Orchestra.

Musical theater, painting and orchestra make up just a few of the creative disciplines supported by the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival. What started as a jazz festival in 1980 now includes workshops, master classes and performances in fields as diverse as ice skating, literature, theater, the healing arts and world music.

"What Jo has done is to totally embrace the arts community across the state," said Kaptur. "They come as participants and audience members, and you don't have to be a certain level of artistic development to participate. People of all levels of expertise can get better at whatever they do. And if you've always wanted to try ballet, you can still do that and nobody's going to say, 'well, you know, you don't have the right physique or training.' No matter how experienced you are, you can enjoy these opportunities. That's what makes this festival so unique. That's what makes it like nothing I've seen anywhere else."

The festival works closely with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, which provides the venue. People who want to get academic credit can do so, and out-of-town registrants can stay in dorm rooms at reasonable rates.

That helps keep costs down. Registration for the first two-week festival was $60, said Scott. This year, a participant can register for the entire festival and join any class based on space availability and the required level of experience for $550.

"I always wanted to keep costs down for the people in Fairbanks who are already giving their time or paying for a babysitter or volunteering for the symphony, opera or other organization," said Scott.

Meanwhile, continued outreach to artists outside of Alaska helps sustain the festival's reputation as a challenging, rewarding learning environment for beginners and masters alike. The 2010 festival will feature instructors like Robert Franz, associate conductor of the Houston Symphony and music director of the Boise Philharmonic and Mansfield Symphony, and Okaidia Afroso of Ghana, who will lead the World Music Dance and Drumming classes.

Bringing in high caliber teachers has built a fan base that continues to enrich the festival today. In 2003 the Marriott Foundation gave the festival $1 million to create an endowment and some financial security. Other corporate and individual contributors help pay for everything from teacher salaries and airline tickets to scholarships and equipment like musical instruments. The festival now has of ce space and two paid staf members, including Kaptur.

"I want to build on the energy of the 30th anniversary celebration and nurture collaborations between the dif erent disciplines and between the festival and other nonprofits," said Kaptur.

She foresees growth in the number of participants from within and out of state and wants to build on the festival's relationship with the university and the tourism industry. The 2009 festival had registrants from 23 Alaska communities and 27 states, and Kaptur believes those numbers can grow.

She already achieved a short-term goal of making online registration possible by March *(www.fsaf.org)*. Looking to the future, she hopes to continue expanding the range of classes while nurturing opportunities for participants to showcase their work.

If the last 30 years taught her anything, it's that anything can happen. Kaptur knows from working at other festivals that "it's like riding a luge and once you gain momentum, you just steer and hope your advance planning pays off … I'm having the time of my life. I love the atmosphere. I love the feeling. I love the rhythm."

HALIBUT COVE

PEOPLE IN HALIBUT COVE FISH, WALK, RIDE HORSES AND HAUL WATER. THEY KNOW EACH OTHER BY NAME. THEY THROW A PIZZA PARTY EVERY WEEK AND A PIRATE PARTY EVERY YEAR.

HALIBUT COVE RESIDENTS PADDLE THEIR BOATS TO DINNER PARTIES. THEY WEAR RUBBER BOOTS TO RESTAURANTS. AND WHEN THEY HEAD TO THE DOCK, THEY WALK PAST A GALLERY FILLED WITH PAINTINGS, POTTERY, JEWELRY AND OTHER ARTWORK BY FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS.

Photos courtesy of Toni Maury and Marian Beck.

"Diana always wanted the Cove to be an art community and the Tillions gave property to Alex Combs. Clem (Tillion) has often said it was the best investment he ever made."

— **ANNETTE BELLAMY**
CLAY ARTIST

Whether you call Halibut Cove an art community that likes fishing or a fishing community that likes art hardly matters; in this idyllic setting six miles from Homer, art thrives by the sea and hard work provides the sinew.

"The Cove became an art community because of the long range vision and mentorship of Alex Combs and Diana Tillion," said Annette Bellamy, a clay artist who commercial fishes every summer. "Diana always wanted the Cove to be an art community and the Tillions gave property to Alex Combs. Clem (Tillion) has often said it was the best investment he ever made."

Known for big brush strokes in work and life, Combs molded many Halibut Cove painters and potters into artists with broad curiosities and rigorous skills. He helped push the idea of a cooperative gallery as an economic and artistic venue for students and colleagues.

The Halibut Cove Experience Gallery opened on the Homer Spit in the mid-1980s and moved to the Cove a few years later. By then, everyone understood the value of promoting the community as a travel and art destination. Today, the gallery and lone restaurant draw up to 100 visitors a day in the summer.

According to census figures, Halibut Cove has about 35 year-round residents, but probably twice that many live in the Cove all summer. At least 20 identify as artists. Some, like Bellamy, work in their Cove studios all winter; others head elsewhere, like Sydney Bishop, who captains a boat in Hawaii.

The community started as a herring fishery in the early 1900s, but the industry collapsed and emerged later as an artists' haven when Clem and Diana Tillion moved to the area in the 1950s. Already an accomplished artist, Diana started painting with ink from octopuses found in a lagoon near her home.

She later opened the Cove Gallery and continued making art until her death in February, 2009 at the age of 81. Her gallery will close without her work to fill it, but her vision continues through the people she nourished, including her daughter Marian Beck.

HALIBUT COVE

Alex Combs made art and conducted workshops in Halibut Cove for 30 years, encouraging the opening of the Halibut Cove Experience Gallery. He and Diana Tillion worked with many of today's Cove artists, including Tillion's daughter Marian Beck, who also runs the Danny J ferry and the Saltry Restaurant.

"By the second grade, I could paint but not spell," said Beck, who owns and operates the Saltry Restaurant, along with the Danny J, a green and white wooden-hulled ferry that has made daily trips between Homer and Halibut Cove since 1966. She started running the boat in 1974 and opened the Saltry in the 1980s. She sees both as extensions of her aesthetic, from the Danny's J's refurbished fir deck to the Saltry's handmade plates, locally sawn lumber and local catch of the day.

"Art making is a part of everything here," she said. "It's hard to say how the whole sense of community is entwined with art." Or, for that matter, how everyone is entwined with each other. Beck hires local women to run the Danny J. In the early days that meant working with her cousin Bishop, the potter and boat captain, along with friends like artist Toni Maury, and now with their daughters too.

Other water taxis get people to and from the Cove, but the Danny J plies the waves like a local character and iconic workhorse, turning the journey into a tour around Gull Island. When passengers disembark for a few hours or days, they walk the boardwalk, eat at the Saltry and visit the gallery.

Homer's size and reputation make it attractive to people interested in an artist community, said Maury, and "it's a great place for us to introduce people to Halibut Cove, which has been known for its art from the time Clem started the Danny J because his wife was an artist. Back then there was the Danny J, Diana's gallery, and maybe a fire on the beach with some complementary hot drinks.

People came for the beauty and quietude, and they come for the same reasons today. The gallery's simple wood A-Frame on the boardwalk along the dock show work by Maury, Bellamy, Beck, Bishop, Tillion, Combs and others.

"We are proud of the quality of art in our gallery," said Maury, who first came to Halibut Cove in the mid-1970s and has been involved with managing the gallery for 15 years. "We don't make tons of money, but we make a decent living and we've stayed true to our mission. We work with the Danny J and the Saltry to give our visitors a unique experience, and I feel like they see who we are through our art."

Walking around Halibut Cove reveals where these artists find their inspiration, whether from the rutted trails, coves, beaches, hills and surrounding mountains, or from inside studios along the way. From the edge of the Cove's cemetery, you can see the Homer Spit without hearing its bustle – and pay respects to a clay sculpture of Combs, who made and taught art in the Cove for 30 years.

Many of the community's artists took Combs's workshops or spent time at his studio, a worn wood structure next to a sometimes dusty, sometimes muddy, sometimes snowy path used by walkers, horses, bikes and ATVs. Bellamy shared Combs' studio to do firings for ten years and Maury's two children now own the place.

Beck also spent years working with Combs in his studio. "If it weren't for Alex walking into my life," she said, "I wouldn't be where I am today in terms of my art."

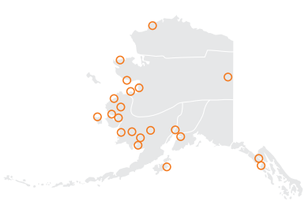
If Diana Tillion gave artists a reason to believe they could turn an old fishery into an art destination, Combs inspired the passion and confidence for doing it. "Diana and Alex gave workshops to all of us," said Bellamy. "They gave critiques when asked, sometimes when not asked, and they supported and encouraged all of us in our opportunities to exhibit and expand."

Cove artists send work to exhibits and galleries in Homer, Anchorage and beyond, but they treasure the homegrown gallery that links them plank-by-plank to the economy of the community and the legacy of art-making that came before them.

Atkinson started knitting in 1988 and now makes one item a month. "Other than earning some money while working at home at my own pace

I like knowing that my handiwork is admired by many people in many countries. It gives me pride in our Alaska animals, in American ingenuity, and in Native women."

— **MESONGA ATKINSON**
QIVIUT KNITTER



PALMER, ANCHORAGE WAINWRIGHT, SHISHMAREF, UNALAKLEET, STEBBINS, ST. MICHAELS, EMMONAK, ST. MARY'S, NOME, BETHEL, QUINHAGAK, NELSON ISLAND, NEWTOK, MEKORYUK, GOODNEWS BAY, DILLINGHAM, ALEKNAGIK, EKWOK, NEW STUYAHOK, KOLIGANEK, KODIAK, EAGLE AND ANGOON

OOMINGMAK, THE MUSK OX PRODUCERS' CO-OPERATIVE

MOST MORNINGS, FRANCIS DEGNAN KNITS MUSK OX WOOL IN HER HOME IN UNALAKLEET, A TOWN OF 750 ON THE BERING SEA IN WESTERN ALASKA. HER WORK HELPS PAY FOR UTILITIES AND GROCERIES.

BETTY BORG LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STATE IN EAGLE, A TOWN OF 200 ON THE BORDER WITH THE YUKON TERRITORY, CANADA. NOW RETIRED, SHE KNITS 50 TO 70 ITEMS A YEAR FOR EXTRA INCOME.

Knitters photo © Chris Arend. Building photo © Paul Wilcox. Other photos courtesy of Oomingmak.

The Nome-born mother of grown children, Mesonga Atkinson lives in Anchorage and knits to earn extra cash for herself.

These women live hundreds, even thousands of miles away from each other, but they share an avocation and pride. They transform the downy, fine hair of musk ox – the qiviut – into hats, scarves, tunics and other garments as members of Oomingmak, Musk Ox Producers' Co-Operative.

"It is one of the oldest co-ops in the United States," said Sigrun Robertson, who manages Oomingmak. "Our membership has a say in how it's run and most of them want to knit when they feel like it and send in garments when they need the money."

For people in Alaska villages where few year-round jobs exist, and milk and heating oil can cost $6 or more a gallon, the extra money makes a huge difference. They send what they knit to the co-op's store in Anchorage, which sells most of the garments from its central, albeit cramped, location and via mail order.

"Our members might send in a bunch of knitting before Christmas or fish camp when they need supplies," said Robertson. "That's the best part of this co-op – that they have control over when and what they earn."

Providing a sustainable economic resource to people in Alaska villages inspired University of Alaska Fairbanks anthropologist John Teal Jr. to domesticate musk ox in the 1950s. The Musk Ox Project got funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and assistance from the University of Alaska. The first farm started in Fairbanks in 1964 and operates out of Palmer now.

The project involved outlying communities such as Mekoryuk and Bethel starting in 1968 through workshops that taught women how to knit qiviut garments. The co-op formed in 1969 and took the Eskimo word "oomingmak" or "bearded one" as its namesake.

That first year, 25 knitters made nearly 300 scarves and earned $25 a garment, said Robertson. Forty years later, 250 women produced nearly 4,500 items and were paid a base fee per 1,000 stitches, plus extra for any finishing work. Co-op members also earn annual dividends based on their work for the year.

Qiviut knitters Mesonga Atkinson, originally from Shishmaref, along with Margaret Hobbs from Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island, Eliza Tom from Newtok on Nelson Island and Joyce Haynes from Bethel transform the downy under-hair of the musk ox into garments finer than cashmere, warmer than other wools as members of Oomingmak, Musk Ox Producers' Co-Operative.

Degnan joined the co-op in 1976 and sees her contribution as more than a way to make ends meet. Staying current on her utility bills keeps the cost down for everyone in Unalakleet, she said via letter, and "what I buy locally generates a five percent sales tax to keep the city going—all providing jobs to local people."

The co-op in turn supports the nonprofit Palmer Musk Ox Farm by buying the bulk of its fiber. It also gets material from the Large Animal Research Station in Fairbanks, and from Alaska villagers, who collect the hair during subsistence hunts.

Combing a musk ox yields only 3 to 6 pounds of fiber. Most mills require at least 600 pounds, and since the co-op likes to work with mills that spin cashmere, it often waits years to send out the wool and get the yarn back. Qiviut is a delicate fiber, after all, and taking advantage of its qualities means accepting its limitations – such as its natural brown color, low yields and distinct temperament.

As it sheds from the animal, the wool appears in unkempt clumps, but once knitted into garments, the yarn feels remarkably light, warm and robust. It provides unparalleled warmth compared to other wools, said Robertson, and it feels finer and softer than cashmere.

"It's an arctic fiber and the arctic people in Alaska villages knit it into traditional arctic patterns," she said.

Knitting is not a tradition in Alaska Native cultures, but knitters from each village use patterns linked to traditional art. For instance, the pattern developed by knitters in Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island comes from a 1,200-year-old ivory object with a harpoon design carved on it. In Unalakleet, they knit the wolverine mask pattern used in traditional dances.

Though an Alaskan Native co-op, Oomingmak accepts all knitters as long as they live in a village with co-op members, which means that someone like Borg, who came to Alaska from Missouri in 1950, knits patterns inspired by the landscape, climate and lifestyle of remote Alaska. For her, "knitting helps to keep my brain active and alive."

Whatever the pattern, by far the most popular style of garment is the nachaq or smoke ring, a hat or hood that can be worn around the head or neck. "It's our signature piece," said Robertson. "It's unique, attractive, practical and reasonably priced."

The co-op makes more elaborate, labor-intensive items such as stoles and tunics as well, along with a line of hats made with 80 percent qiviut and 20 percent silk, but it decided against dying or machine knitting the yarn. Oomingmak wants to preserve the natural color and texture of the wool, and honor the skill of its knitters, said Robertson.

The co-op does about 82 to 85 percent of its sales through its location in Anchorage and the rest through wholesale sales to the Palmer farm, a few shops in other Alaska cities, and the David Morgan store in Seattle.

Robertson would like to find one to five outlets out of state that would sell 500 garments a year, but not if it means altering how the co-op does business.

"The only way to increase sales is to comb more musk ox to support our knitters," she said. "In the beginning, the co-op wanted to go all over the world, but then everyone wanted to dictate what and how much we made."

"We know who we are and if you want to work with us, you have to accept how we operate. And we simply won't go Outside for knitters."

SIGRUN ROBERTSON, MANAGER

Project Chariot 2007 crew shoot in Point Hope Alaska: Camera Dustinn Craig, Producer/Director, Rachel Naninaaq Edwardson, Co-Producer (in training) Rainey Higbee, Production Assistants Ray Kious and Karl Frankson.

UNCIVILIZED FILMS

STORIES ABOUND ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE, AND FILMMAKER RACHEL EDWARDSON WANTS TO GIVE THEM VOICE.

Photo courtesy of Dustinn Craig.

"I'm driven creatively because I love the media, but it's bigger than that. It's about developing our voices and adopting this new tool to strengthen our modern society and engage our tradition of storytelling."

— **RACHEL EDWARDSON**
FILMMAKER AND FOUNDER OF UNCIVILIZED FILMS

"Our indigenous community, our traditional form of story telling has been put aside by modern digital media," said Edwardson, who runs a Barrow-based business called Uncivilized Films. "In the North Slope and much of Alaska, we're surrounded by TVs, computers and iPods, and the messages and stories are all coming from the West, they're all Western-based mythologies. There's nothing wrong with that, unless you're in the village and all the stories are foreign to the place you were born into. Your morals, identity and culture are pushed aside."

In response, she and others are working toward establishing a media hub and interactive Native network on the North Slope of Alaska to train people in the region how to create broadcast quality content. Outside filmmakers who come to the North Slope almost always ask for support, she said.

Edwardson produced and directed the 13-part Alaska political and current af airs series, "Home Rule," and continues work on an oral history-based series "History of the Iñupiat" for the North Slope Borough School District. The first episode premiered in 2006 and the latest, now in post-production, tells the story of how the village of Point Hope, with the help of a small group of scientists, stopped a 1961 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission plan to build a artificial harbor by detonating multiple nuclear devices near Cape Thompson on the North Slope.

Documentary work keeps her busy and satisfies her drive to make films, but a 2009 Sundance Institute Ford Foundation Film fellowship allowed her to develop a script for a narrative feature based on one of her grandmother's stories.

"It gave me a chance to focus on my own creative work," she said. "That was the first big thing it did. When you're running your own business, you don't usually get to stop and do things that won't bring in money."

The mentorship of feature filmmakers helped her enrich the script and prepare it for filming. Depending on funding, she hopes to shoot the short narrative this year and use it to raise funds for a full-length feature project.

Meanwhile, she continues doing media workshops with youth. The idea, she said, is to use "media and filmmaking to re-engage young people to their community and heritage."

BARROW

Cover photo © Todd Paris