



Seward Statehood Grant Committee
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Patty Linville, 907-224-4008
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SEWARD HOME OF ALASKA'S FLAG STATEHOOD SYMPOSIUM

The Seward Statehood Grant Committee is proud to announce a symposium on May 1 & 2, 2009 at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) and Kenai Fjords National Park Legend's building celebrating Alaska's statehood and Seward's home of the state flag. A mural by artist Justine Pechuzal will be unveiled to join the many others in town which make Seward "The Mural Capital of Alaska." Walter J. "Wally" Hickel, Vic Fischer, Keith Miller, Edgar Blatchford, Jack Roderick, Mary Barry, Paul Ongtooguk, and Jackie Pels will be panelists. Supporters include the Rasmuson Foundation, the Alaska Humanities Forum, and Hotel Seward.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Events associated with the symposium will kick off on Friday, May 1, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. with a School Program at the William H. Seward Elementary School at 600 Sea Lion Drive.

Between 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. the Seward Arts Council 1st Friday Gallery Walk will commence with the symposium as a stop and a preview of the mural.

At 6:30 p.m. at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) at 519 4th Ave, the symposium kicks-off with a reception. There will be a Seward children's choir program, then Governor Wally Hickel's keynote address, and a preview of the mural. Refreshments will be served.

On Saturday, May 2, 2009 at the Kenai Fjords National Park Legends Building at 412 Washington Street

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Alaska Statehood Panel. Panelists will be Vic Fischer, Jack Roderick, Keith Miller and Wally Hickel.

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch (on your own)

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Seward: Home of Alaska's Flag Panel. Panelists will be Mary Barry, Jackie Pels, Paul Ongtooguk and Edgar Blatchford.

Seward Statehood Grant Committee, P. O. Box 2389, Seward, AK 99664
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2:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Mural Unveiling

3:15 p.m. Closing Ceremonies

MURAL UNVEILING

One of the exciting outcomes of this grant is a new mural for Seward, “The Mural Capital of Alaska”. The mural will be unveiled on Saturday, May 2nd. The mural's permanent home will be on the west lawn of the U. S. Post Office at 507 Madison Street.

The artist, Justine Pechuzal is a Seward resident with a strong background in community and public art. She has a bachelor’s degree in creative writing, art history, and studio art and a master’s in art education from the University of Arizona. Her work focuses on the intersection of words, images, and culture in media such as watercolor, pastel, paint, and ceramics. Three years of working as a sea kayak guide in Resurrection Bay inspired the mural you will see this weekend!

“I focused on the concept of home, expanding on the theme Seward: Home of Alaska's Flag to reflect upon what people call this unique geographical place home, how they have made it home, and the biotic community that supports these efforts.”

PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES FOLLOW

Walter J. “Wally” Hickel was born in Kansas in 1919. He moved to Alaska in 1940 working as a bartender, carpenter and developer. He founded a construction company in 1947 and built it into a multi-million dollar firm. During the 1950’s he played a major role in getting 103 million acres included in Alaska’s statehood land entitlement. He developed hotels, housing and shopping centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Seward.

He was Alaska’s second governor (1966-1969), he was appointed Secretary of the Interior by President Nixon he was a strong environmentalist. He sharply criticized President Nixon’s hostility to the student anti-war demonstrators which led to his forced resignation. He was again elected governor in 1990.

He devotes much of his time to the Institute of the North to help teach people in Alaska and around the world about the common ownership of lands and oceans and how to manager the “commons.”

He is the author of the book, Who Owns America?

Victor Fischer is professor of public affairs at the University of Alaska, where he is director emeritus of both the Institute of Social and Economic Research and the Office of Russian Affairs. Fischer has held positions with the federal, state and local

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governments devoted to regional and community development. He was an elected delegate to Alaska's constitutional convention and served in the Alaska state senate.

The son of an American father and Russian mother, Vic Fischer lived during his early years in Russia, Germany, Ukraine, and the United States. During World War II, he served with the American army in France, Germany and the Philippines. Fischer has degrees from the University of Wisconsin, MIT and Harvard.

Keith Miller former Alaska governor Keith H. Miller was born March 1, 1925 in Seattle. He is a veteran of the Army Air Corps from World War II, and graduated from the University of Washington.

He homesteaded at Talkeetna in 1959-60, was elected to the Alaska House in 1962, and elected in 1966 as Lt. Governor. He became governor in January 1969 when Gov. Walter J. Hickel resigned to become Secretary of the Interior.

Edgar Blatchford received his bachelor's degree from Alaska Methodist University 1973, his law degree from University of Washington in 1976, and his masters in journalism from Columbia University 1988.

His varied career includes mayor of Seward (1999-2003), Commissioner of Community and Regional Affairs (1990-1994), Commissioner of the Department of Community and Economic Development (2003-2005), numerous terms as chairman of the Chugach Alaska Corporation and Associate Professor of Journalism and Public Communications at the University of Alaska-Anchorage.

Mary Barry, author of three volumes of Seward Alaska A History of the Gateway City, A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula, and numerous other books was born in Seward and lived there permanently until her graduation from UCLA, at which time she married and lived mostly in Anchorage after that. She has maintained her ties to Seward through her family and friends there. Seward's fascinating and varied history prompted her to write of these events recently.

Paul Ongtooguk he received a bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy from Northwest College, Kirkland, Washington 1979, and another bachelor's degree in history from the University of Washington 1981, he received his master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Michigan State University 1990.

He worked as a middle and high school teacher and curriculum developer for the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. He was an elected member of the Kotzebue IRA council for three years and was a delegate to the Alaska Federation of Natives.

He has been a visiting assistant professor at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, a visiting Instructor at Kuskokwim Campus of the University of Alaska, Simon Fraser University, the University of Pennsylvania as well as an assistant professor at Ilisagvik

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College in Barrow, Alaska. He is a professor of secondary education with the College of Education at the University of Alaska-Anchorage

John “Jack” R. Roderick was born in Seattle, Washington in 1926. He served in the Navy Air Corps during World War II. He received his bachelor’s degree from Yale University 1949, his law degree from University of Washington 1959, and his masters in public administration from Harvard University 1981. He came to Alaska in 1954 working as a truck driver until becoming involved in publishing numerous oil-related publications. He has also founded many small oil and resource-related businesses.

He has held numerous and varied government positions, He was regional Director of the U. S. Peace Corps in India (1967-1968), he was the Greater Anchorage borough mayor (1972 to 1975), Deputy Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (1976-1978), Alaska Director of the U. S. Farmer’s Home Administration (1978-1979), and Alaska State Energy Director and member of the Royalty Oil and Gas Development Advisory Board (1984-1985.)

He is the author of the book, *Crude Dreams: A Personal History of Oil & Politics in Alaska*.

Jackie Benson Pels was born in Seward, reared mostly in coastal Alaska, she graduated from Kenai Territorial High School in 1953 and from the School of Journalism at UC Berkeley 30 years later. At Hardscratch Press, named for a family codfishing station on Unga Island, she has published two dozen “real people’s histories.” The latest, *Family After All: Alaska’s Jesse Lee Home (Unalaska and Seward)*, received the Alaska Historical Society’s 2008 Contributions to Alaska History Award.

SUPPORT

Funding for the Mural and Symposium was provided by the Rasmuson Foundation, the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Alaska Statehood Experience Grant Program 2008.

The Hotel Seward generously provided accommodations for the panelists.

The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) and Kenai Fjords Park Service generously provided the facilities for the symposium.

AVTEC also provided space for the artist to paint the mural.

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