

Governor's Alaska Military History Museum Advisory Task Force  
Initial Report  
October 1, 2018.

The Governor's Alaska Military History Museum Advisory Task Force (hereinafter, the Task Force), was established pursuant to Administrative Order No. 293, April 21, 2018, for the term June 1, 2018 to June 1, 2020. The members of the Task Force, as appointed by the governor, are as follows.

Prof. Paul E. Dunscomb, University of Alaska Anchorage, Chair.

Ric Davidge, Alaska Military Heritage Museum.

Craig Fleener, Alaska Military Heritage Museum.

Michael Haller, Exec. Director and President of the Board, Alaska Veterans Museum.

Angela Linn, Senior Collections Manager: Ethnology and History, University of Alaska Museum of the North.

Dennis Parish, President of the Board, Alaska Aviation Museum.

Jean Pollard, The Alaska Highway Project.

James Renkert, Friends of Nike Site Summit.

Rob Stapleton, Alaska Aviation Museum.

Lt. Col. Russell Vanderlugt, USA, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Northern Studies Program.

Kaleigh Wotring, Alaska Veterans Museum.

In addition, John Binder, of the Alaska Department of Transportation serves as a non-voting representative for the state. Bianca Carpeneti of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is attached as liaison for the AK National Guard. Linda Bustamante of the Department of Transportation is providing administrative and logistical support to the Task Force.

The first meeting of the Task Force was held July 12, 2018 at which time the members received their formal charge from the governor. The Task Force has met twice since, August 23 and September 26, 2018. As a result of those discussions we submit this preliminary status report, as stipulated in Administrative Order No. 293.

The Task Force was established to "serve as an advisory panel to...conduct research and outreach to evaluate and propose options for consolidating efforts to preserve Alaska's military heritage and history." The duties of the Task Force were specified as follows:

- Research other existing or planned efforts to capture and preserve Alaskan military history.
- Facilitate coordination of all known efforts to eliminate redundancy and enhance efficiency.
- Conduct an inventory of sites and artifacts of military significance.
- Facilitate the collection of appropriate oral histories.
- Provide recommendations for a coordinated effort to establish an Alaska Military History Museum to include possible location(s) and governance structures(s).
- Research funding opportunities, to include public/private partnerships and military options, to support the construction and ongoing operation of museum sites and facilities.

At our inaugural meeting Governor Walker noted that the principal question which the Task Force should seek to address was “Is the State of Alaska doing all it can do to preserve Alaska’s military heritage, past present and future?” The short answer to this question is no. There are numerous things that the state of Alaska could do to further ensure the protection, preservation, curation, and display of artifacts, stories, knowledge, and experience of Alaska’s military history (and indeed, its history in general).

Our initial discussions quickly established that there is no requirement for the state of Alaska to establish its own military history museum. Between individual collections, private, non-profit collections and museums, the state’s own libraries, archives, special collections and museums, and efforts of the Federal Government such as the National Park Service, the U.S. military, and other agencies there is a dense web of individuals and organizations engaged in this effort.<sup>1</sup> Rather than seeing these efforts as redundant or inefficient we see the potential for a robust network which, through cooperation and with some assistance, can truly forward this important work. That being said, there are numerous challenges and difficulties which confront all those involved in the task of preserving Alaska’s military heritage and history. These would include:

- Acquisition and maintenance of appropriate and suitable space for archiving and storage, curation and preservation, as well as display and interpretation of artifacts and materials relevant to the military history of the state.
- The active curation of artifacts and materials rather than their simple acquisition and storage. This includes the question of disposition of artifacts and materials which are either lacking historic value or are redundant.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A includes preliminary results of a survey created by Angela Linn and Kaleigh Wotring to capture efforts around the state to protect, preserve, and make available to the public Alaska’s military heritage and history.

- Protection of historic sites and artifacts on state lands as well as the preservation of historic buildings, landmarks, facilities, etc. within all of Alaska.
- Failure of the state to devote appropriate resources to its existing museums, archives, and library special collections and those tasked by the state to preserve and protect its history.
- The lack of any professional or academic certification or training opportunities in Public History within the state despite the large number of projects and organizations which would benefit from it.

In order to provide recommendations to the governor about what might be done, the Task Force proposes to take the following actions.

First, sub-committees will be formed of the various members each to investigate discreet aspects of these larger issues.

Second, sub-committees will report their findings in time for the next status report which is due to the governor on October 1, 2019.

Third, with the reports of the sub-committees in hand, the Task Force shall craft their recommendations to the governor which will be presented in its final report due to the governor on June 1, 2020.

In accordance to this plan the Task Force, at its September 26 meeting, established the following sub-committees.

**Capacity Building Committee:** Explore means to coordinate activities, share information, and exchange artifacts and materials between public (state and federal) and private institutions within the state. Examine possible consortium arrangements to assist smaller museums with the storage and curation of collections, records, and archives. Create a robust network for collaboration and sharing of materials online, digitally or virtually.

**Designation, Protection, Preservation and Disposition Committee:** State designation and protection of historical sites wherever occurring within the state. The disposition of state-owned properties of historical significance or instrumental in assisting the collection, curation, display of Alaska's military history.

**Current State Responsibilities Committee:** Address immediate and long-term needs of museums, libraries, archives and special collections maintained by the state.

**Public History and Awareness Committee:** Creation of academic and/or professional training and certification programs in Public History to assist current and future efforts to capture and preserve Alaska's history. Promote programs to increase historical mindedness among the public and engage individuals, veterans and active duty personnel in the preservation of Alaska's military history.

In much the same way as the Alaska Highway was originally conceived purely for military purposes but is now a vital link with the outside open to all, the work of the various committees, while focused specifically on the topic of Alaska's military history, hopefully will lead to the creation of robust structures for communication and outreach that can benefit all those undertaking the task of preserving Alaska's history and heritage.

As the investigations proceed, it is possible that the tasks or focus of various sub-committees may be changed to pursue particularly fruitful inquiries. Additional sub-committees may be formed as needed to investigate previously unforeseen issues or opportunities.

While certain issues the sub-committees will tackle are contentious, we hope to approach them in a spirit of mutual respect and with the knowledge that all parties seek the larger goal of assisting the State of Alaska to facilitate public and private efforts to preserve its history.

Respectfully Submitted.

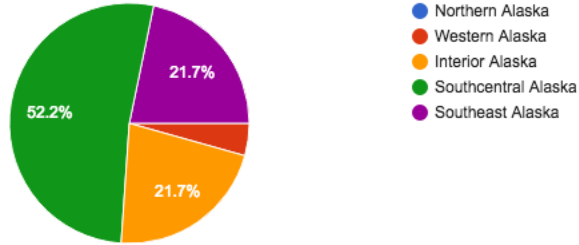
Governor's Alaska Military History Museum Advisory Task Force

Prof. Paul E. Dunscomb, Chair.

## Appendix A: Preliminary Survey Results

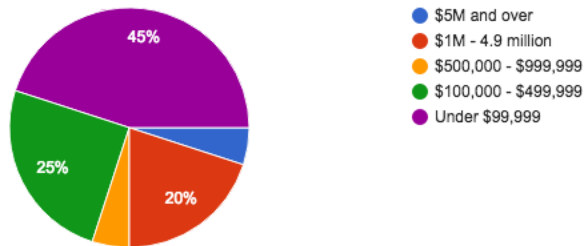
### Location of museum / cultural center

23 responses



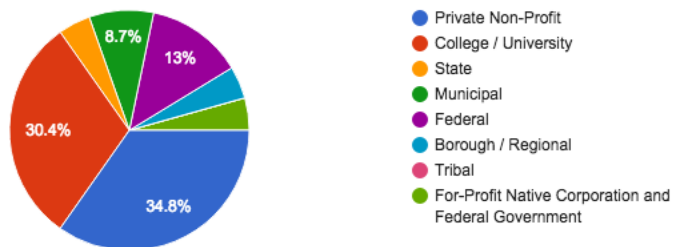
### Annual budget of museum / cultural center

20 responses



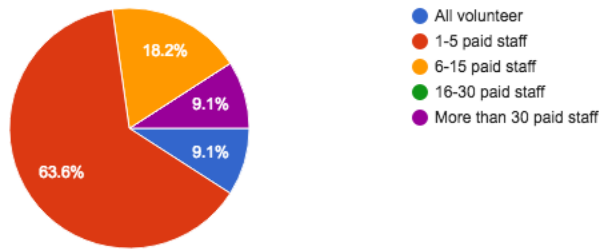
### Governance Type

23 responses



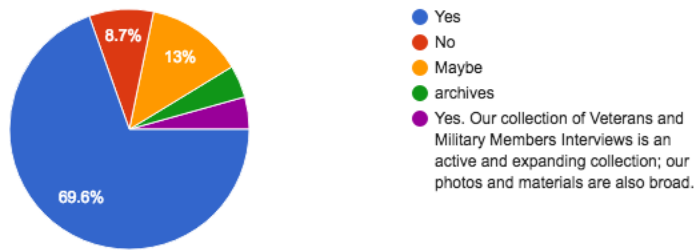
### Staff Size (FTE paid staff)

22 responses



### Do you hold collections that document Alaska's military history?

23 responses



### Do you feel Alaska's museums and cultural centers are doing a good job of preserving, documenting, and interpreting the military history of Alaska?

23 responses

