

Huna Totem Corporation: Community Benefit

Hoonah has largely avoided the decline of population and economic activity that has plagued many other Southeast Alaska communities in part because of Huna Totem Corporation's contributions to the community. Investment in cultural tourism has revitalized not only the village of Hoonah, but also fostered a revival of Tlingit traditions and customs amongst the Huna people.

Employment

- Icy Strait Point is the largest employer in Hoonah and accounts for an estimated 20 percent of total Hoonah employment on an annual basis, and 28 percent in its peak months.
 - The wilderness port destination generates 137 full-time and seasonal jobs annually and \$2.2 million in payroll in Hoonah each year.
 - More than 85 percent Native hire and 90 percent local hire has been maintained since construction began in 2001. In 2010, 131 of the 137 people (96 percent) on the Icy Strait Point payroll were Hoonah residents.
 - Icy Strait Point also has spurred new job creation at companies that provide guiding services (such as kayaking and stream fishing); retail shops on site; and businesses serving guests independently, such as in-town restaurants, retailers and excursion services.
 - Huna Totem Corporation's Cultural Interpretive Services program also has provided jobs in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve for the past 12 years. As the traditional homeland of the Huna Tlingit people, these jobs have largely been filled by Hoonah residents, Huna Totem Corporation shareholders and their descendants.

STORY ANGLE: Carvers draw crowds to Icy Strait Point totem poles.

Hoonah residents Gordon Greenwald, Herb Sheakley, Owen James and Louis White, Jr. have been putting their traditional carving skills to work lately. The team restored two Tlingit totem poles on site at Icy Strait Point this summer, drawing quite a crowd as they discussed with visitors the details of the work and the significance. The same men are also responsible for carving a 16-by-32-foot traditional house screen, the centerpiece of a 3,500-square-foot Tlingit tribal house being constructed in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. Once built, the tribal house will serve as an interpretive center where park visitors can learn about Tlingit culture and will offer a place for Tlingit communities and organizations to host cultural workshops. The carvers will have several more projects to complete over the next few years before the house opens to the public.

Local Spending

- Icy Strait Point spent more than \$3.6 million on goods and services in 2009. Approximately 20 percent of that spending, about \$730,000, occurred in Hoonah. Icy Strait Point made purchases from 20 different Hoonah businesses and organizations.

Tax Revenues

- Since 2003, annual sales tax revenues to the City of Hoonah have more than doubled, primarily due to Icy Strait Point. In 2009, Icy Strait Point made \$327,000 in sales tax payments to the City of Hoonah. This is equal to approximately 60 percent of all sales tax revenues earned by the city. Icy Strait Point is directly providing 30 percent of all City of Hoonah revenues.

Shareholder Benefits

- Icy Strait Point's profits are used by Huna Totem Corporation to support the Huna Heritage Foundation, which exists to perpetuate Huna culture and promote education for present and future generations of Huna people. One of the foundation's largest programs is higher education scholarships for Hoonah youth who are attending college, vocational school or cultural workshops. From 2004 through 2010, Huna Heritage Foundation provided \$456,000 through 284 scholarships; approximately \$30,000 in scholarships will be awarded in October 2011.

In addition to supporting Hoonah's economic viability, Icy Strait Point and the Cultural Interpretive Services program help perpetuate Tlingit culture. Through storytelling and presentations, elders and youth share their history, artwork, values and lifestyles with cruise ship visitors and independent travelers. A committee of elders was established to ensure the cultural integrity of the stories and dances used in the theater at Icy Strait Point. New performances, like the traditional Tlingit story "The Strongman" introduced last year, are added occasionally. Other traditional skills and practices are put to use on the job, from preparing traditional foods to speaking the Tlingit language. Just this year, Tlingit carving demonstrations opened to the public, as did a Native craft market, where local artisans sold their pieces. The original 1912 cannery houses a museum providing a historical look at Alaska, Hoonah and the cannery.

Members of the community have come alive with pride and strength as they share their history and their culture with visitors. Through this sharing comes a greater sense of knowledge and ownership of Tlingit culture and tradition, which in turn strengthens the community as a whole and assures that the culture is passed on for coming generations to understand and embrace.

Community Member Profiles

Paul Johanson

Icy Strait Point mechanic Paul Johanson reports to work every day at the same salmon cannery site where his grandfather worked. It's just a short walk down the shore to the house where his mom grew up. Sixty years later, a lot has changed in the Tlingit village of Hoonah. The cannery site remains the lifeblood of the Native Alaska village, but instead of fish, it now welcomes hundreds of

thousands of cruise travelers each summer to Icy Strait Point.

Johanson has seen the changes Icy Strait Point has brought to Hoonah first hand — jobs, new businesses, financing for city programs, scholarship money for local kids, even local pride — and while he was skeptical at the outset of the corporation's venture, he admits the changes have been positive. "We've created jobs for a number of locals who are now regular employees, and the community has embraced it. I've seen more and more locals talking with travelers coming in off the ships, being open minded and friendly." Johanson and 15 members of his family work at Icy Strait Point.

Royal Hill

Hoonah resident Royal Hill opened Royal Charters, a halibut charter operation, back in 1993. He proposed a plan to work with Icy Strait Point right when it opened in 2004, but the partnership wasn't formalized until the 2006 season when Hill became the official charter operator of Icy Strait Point's halibut fishing excursion. Hill saw his gross revenues increase and his business expand soon after. He hired new crew and is now running three boats during the season — an expansion that would not have happened without the steady stream of work from Icy Strait Point. Enough independent charter requests still come in that he has to pass them off to other local operations, but Hill is happy to spread the economic benefit within the community. "In a community this small, Icy Strait Point has brought in a lot of revenues that extend to other things, like public utilities."

Hill regularly hires high school students as deck hands on his boats. His nephew has even worked with him since he was 12. "It's taught him a great work ethic. All of the kids who work with me love it and want to come back every summer. There are a lot of positives."

Bertha Franulovich

Seven years ago, Bertha Franulovich, a board member of Huna Totem Corporation, was asked to fill in as a cultural interpreter in Glacier Bay. While at first she thought the role would be temporary, Franulovich has had too much fun to give it up. Interested in the Tlingit culture from an early age, she has delighted in sharing the stories and traditions that were taught to her by her grandmother and her parents. "Not only do I love sharing the culture, but I love learning more about it every day," she said. Franulovich counts on family members to continue teaching her what she doesn't already know, but says there isn't an elder in Hoonah who wouldn't be happy to share the information. Her reward for continuing her own cultural education is often a hug or handshake from a cruise ship guest who has related to her presentation. She says the stories of her ancestors and her community resonate across all ethnic groups and often leads guests into thinking about their own ancestors. What does she hope they will take away? Glacier Bay is an ancestral homeland and these are the stories of her people.