



Request for Proposals: Lead Chilkat Weaving Mentor for the Chilkat Weaving Apprenticeship through Sealaska Heritage Institute's Strengthening Our Relationships with Jánwu Program

Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) is seeking a Lead Chilkat Weaving Mentor (Lead Mentor) to participate in a 3-year program to train 12 emerging weaving artists (apprentices) in the skills needed for a Chilkat Robe apprenticeship to prepare weaving materials and co-weave a Chilkat Robe made entirely out of mountain goat wool. The completed robe will be danced for the first time at Celebration 2028.

The selected Lead Mentor will be an experienced Alaska Native Chilkat Weaver with a solid background and body of work in the Chilkat weaving employed in traditional Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian art of Southeast Alaska and will have experience completing Chilkat Robes as the principal Lead Weaver. The weaving materials shall be prepared - and the robe shall be created – in Juneau, Alaska.

The selected Lead Mentor will be an independent contractor who collaborates with SHI and partners to recruit and select advanced level apprentices for the project. The SHI Jánwu Project Director will work closely with the Lead Mentor and SHI's Native Artist Committee in the creation of the apprentice application and selection criteria materials. Mentors and apprentices will conduct their work in Juneau, Alaska.

To be considered, interested individuals will submit their proposals to SHI by 12/15/2025 at 4pm.

Overview of Project

SHI's *Strengthening Our Relationships with Jánwu* program is designed to engage 36 direct beneficiaries in programming co-designed with Alaska Native hunters, weavers, and carvers to revitalize our culturally sustaining use of mountain goats for food and perpetuating our ancient arts. SHI's program participants will learn how to use all components of a mountain goat including roasting and preserving the meat; rendering the tallow; and harvesting the hides, wool and horns.

Chilkat robes have not been woven entirely of mountain goat wool since the 1800's. This Chilkat robe is one of two robes that will be woven entirely of mountain goat wool in Juneau, one created through this program directed by SHI, and another created by Master Weaver, Lily Hope (note, the latter is a separate project and will not be coordinated by SHI). The creation of these robes and the teaching of the ancient practice of horn spoon carving will contribute meaningfully and significantly to the revitalization of these critically endangered art forms.

SHI's Chilkat robe project will be set up as courses for credit through the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) in partnership with UAS, and with support from SHI staff, meaning that specific Student Learning

Objectives (SLOs) will be established by the Lead Mentor, in collaboration with SHI and UAS staff, and progress toward these objectives will be tracked by the Lead Mentor, apprentices, and SHI staff. SLOs must include but will not be limited to: enhancing the apprentices' skills and understanding of Chilkat material preparation and weaving and understanding of cultural protocol and history connected to the work they are creating, as well as developing public interfacing demonstrational skills. Each apprentice will enroll in two college courses to earn 6 college credits upon successful completion of 100 hours of advanced level weaving and independent study course work.

Chilkat weaving apprentices will learn to separate the mountain goat wool from the hide, spin the material with cedar bark, dye weft using natural and synthetic pigments, and weave a Chilkat robe. The Chilkat robe will be brought out at Celebration 2028 and will live in SHI's permanent collection in Juneau where it may be studied by artists and danced by future generations.

Scope of Work

The Lead Mentor selected by SHI will be an independent contractor and educator who will maintain 4 apprentices each year to prepare and spin mountain goat wool, then co-weave one full-sized Chilkat robe.

Estimated length of the Chilkat weaving apprenticeship is 21 months starting in February 2026 and ending in November 2027. The total number of hours for the Lead Mentor is 1,280 hours (equivalent in hours to 8 months of full-time work at 40 hours/week). The Lead Mentor will be compensated at the rate of \$75 per hour for their mentorship of apprentices and their oversight and engagement in wool prep, spinning, dyeing and co-weaving activities for a total of \$96,000.

Seven mountain goat hides, or the equivalent amount of wool needed for a full size Chilkat robe will be provided to the Lead Mentor by SHI. SHI covers expenses for harvesting mountain goats, supplies needed for the apprentices to process mountain goat wool, to prepare Chilkat robe weaving materials with cedar bark and dye, and for the Chilkat pattern board.



Figure 1: The Chilkat pattern board for this project.

The Chilkat Robe Pattern Board will be commissioned by Master NWC Artist, Steve Brown. The Chilkat formline design is generic and representative of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. It is not clan owned or indicative of one clan. Please see Figure 1 above.

Apprentices are paid at \$25 per hour for wool processing and \$35 per hour for wool spinning, dyeing, and co-weaving for a total of \$132,000 for 4,000 hours across 12 apprentices. The total compensation for the Lead Mentor and the Apprentices is \$228,000.

With guidance from the Lead Mentor, the project Apprentices will be responsible for processing the wool and the Apprentices will engage community members, summer camp students, and youth to participate in the initial removal of wool from the hides, removal of guard hairs and carding the wool.

A Visiting Instructor will provide the Lead Mentor and Apprentices with one full week of on-site training on techniques on how to spin 100% Jánwu Wool weft. With guidance from the Lead Mentor, the Apprentices will thigh-spin warp, use spinning wheels to spin weft, and dye the weft using historic ethnographic dyes. The public will be invited to spinning and dyeing demonstrations. Important weaving material preparation processes will be documented by SHI with AV video.

The Lead Mentor will deliver a public lecture about findings from processing, spinning, and dyeing the 100% Jánwu Wool. The Lead Mentor will lead co-weaving activities with 8 Apprentices to co-weave the robe in 3-member co-weaving teams (2 Apprentices and Lead Mentor). The Lead Mentor will deliver a public lecture about co-weaving the 100% Jánwu Wool Chilkat Robe.

By Month 2, the Lead Mentor works with the SHI Project Director to recruit and select 12 Apprentices - Reviews application and suggests any edits - Reviews applicant scoring guide and suggests any edits - Scores applications to select Apprentices By Month 5, the Lead Mentor: Processes the Wool - Guides two or more Apprentices, youth, and community members through completion of Activity 1: Processing the Wool By Month 10, the Lead Mentor: Spins the Wool - Collaborates with the Project Director to identify/obtain the services of the Visiting Instructor to provide 1 week of on-site spinning instruction - Guides multiple apprentices through completion of Activity 2: Spinning the Wool - Delivers a public lecture that SHI livestreams/makes available via its YouTube channel By Month 21, the Lead Mentor: Co-weaves the Chilkat Robe - Leads the Apprentice cohorts to complete Activity 3: Co-weaving the Chilkat Robe - Delivers a public lecture that SHI livestreams/makes available via its YouTube channel				
Project: The Chilkat Robe	Activity 1: Processing Wool	Activity 2: Spinning Wool	Activity 3: Co-Weave Robe	Total Project Hours
Mentor Hours	40 hours	40 hours	1,200 hours	1,280
Apprentice Hours	800 hours (total)	800 hours (total)	2,400 hours (total)	4,000
Project Design Notes: - Apprentice applications are vetted by the Lead Mentor and Apprentices are selected by SHI for this project - The Apprentices each complete a minimum of 300 hours of work on the project - Apprentice hours can be spent on 1 of the 3 project activities – or across 2 or 3 of the activities				

Figure 2: Project Timeline

Artist Qualifications - Lead Mentor

Artists submitting proposals should have the following qualifications:

- Alaska Native (legally authorized to represent their work as Indian art under the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 and either eligible for an Alaska State Council on the Arts Silver Hand permit or would be eligible but for residing outside the state of Alaska at the time of submitting their qualifications).
- Demonstrated experience as Principal Weaver of no fewer than one (1) Alaska Native Chilkat robe (full-sized preferred) and three (3) examples of Chilkat weavings using the distributive style Chilkat design on child size robes and/or full-size robes and/or tunics. This experience should include all aspects of Chilkat robe creation, from preparation of the weaving materials to delivery of the finished, woven product.
- Demonstrated experience in working as a mentor to two or more apprentices on a Chilkat robe project.
- Demonstrated experience in managing budget and scheduling for own projects.
- Qualify to be an approved Adjunct with University of Alaska Southeast. See job requirements here: <https://careers.alaska.edu/jobs/uas-arts-sciences-adjunct-pool-2025-2026-juneau-alaska-united-states>
- Be prepared to work in Juneau, AK.

Proposal Requirements

Interested Native artists should include in their proposals:

- A biographical statement describing the proposer's background, experience mentoring, training, and in the development and execution of Alaska Native weaving projects, including at least three examples (3) of tunics or Chilkat robes using the distributive style Chilkat design, of which at least one (1) must be a Chilkat robe. The statement shall also indicate the owners of the three (3) completed tunics and/or Chilkat robes used as examples in the proposal.
- A photographic portfolio showing a selection of the proposer's work, including a minimum of three (3) tunics or Chilkat robes, of which at least one (1) must be a Chilkat robe.
- A draft outline of student learning outcomes for the weaving apprenticeship.

Please submit a proposal to Crystal Cudworth, Art Program Manager – crystal.cudworth@sealaskaheritage.com

Questions can be addressed to Crystal Cudworth, Art Program Manager – crystal.cudworth@sealaskaheritage.com

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