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## Glacier Bay News Release

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### Xunaa Shuká Hít: A Collaborative Milestone



BARTLETT COVE, ALASKA – On the shores of Bartlett Cove in Glacier Bay National Park, the August 25<sup>th</sup> grand opening of Xunaa Shuká Hít was a powerful day filled with the brilliant sights and sounds of joyous hearts celebrating the Huna Káawu's return to homeland. Hand-carved dugout canoes, spectacular regalia, Tlingit oratory, traditional ceremonies, rhythms of drums and dances, and an air of excitement made it a day to remember!

Although fog filled the air, nothing dampened spirits on this day that coincided with the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the National Park Service (NPS). Growing excitement and expressions of gratitude made the overcast skies bright! The festivities began with the arrival of three hand-carved dugout canoes that appeared out of the Bartlett Cove mist. As the bright red canoes slowly approached the shore in front of the tribal house, and elaborate paddles were raised in friendship, over 800 people gathered

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near the water's edge, celebrating this long-awaited dream; the symbolic return of the Huna Tlingit to their cherished traditional homeland.



The arrival of the canoes was a spectacular highlight

For countless generations, the Huna Tlingit sustained themselves on the abundant resources found throughout the Bay prior to the Little Ice Age. Although villages inside the Bay were overrun by glacial advances in the 1700's, the Huna Tlingit re-established fish camps and seasonal villages soon after glacial retreat. Establishment of Glacier

Bay National Monument in 1925 (and later National Park) and implementation of laws and park regulations led to a period of alienation and strained relationships between tribal people and the National Park Service.

Time and new understandings have brought much healing. In recent years, the NPS and Hoonah Indian Association (HIA), the tribal government, have worked cooperatively to reinvigorate traditional activities, develop cultural programs for youth and adults, amend regulations to allow for a broader range of traditional harvests in park boundaries, and preserve oral histories. The most symbolic cooperative venture now stands proudly on the shoreline of Bartlett Cove. Xunaa Shuká Hít – roughly translated as “Huna Ancestors’ House,” is a tribal house reminiscent of ancestral clan houses, but suitable for the needs of today. The 2,500 square foot structure will serve as a venue for tribal members to reconnect with their traditional homeland, life-ways, and ancestral knowledge; and a focal point for conveying the story of the Huna Tlingit to the visiting public.

To properly dedicate the house, traditional protocols were followed. The tree ceremony acknowledged the trees that provided the materials to build the house and canoes. A traditional naming ceremony breathed life into the house, and proclaimed to all that Xunaa Shuká Hít would serve as an anchor for past, present, and future generations. For their longstanding collaboration, the Park and HIA were presented with the NPS Director's



It was a day of beautiful ceremonies and Tlingit oratory

Partnership Award. Superintendent Philip Hooe stated, “We stood together on each other's shoulders and we were able to reach high. That this symbol of diversity, inclusion and enhanced connections occurred on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NPS is poignant as we step into the next century.”

The celebration continued inside with the showcasing of four carved house posts and the interior screen and a traditional marking of the house's four corners. As Hoonah students led songs, drumming, and dance, the entire building reverberated with excitement and energy.

"Parks tell America's story," stated Tom Vandenberg, Chief of Interpretation. "We all have a story, and like a thread in a giant tapestry, our individual stories make up our country's narrative, our combined heritage. There's really no more profound story than that of homeland and home. Parks all over the country are celebrating the National Park Service centennial today, but here we're celebrating the Huna Tlingit people and their return home. I think this is one of the greatest centennial events in our country."



Drumming and dancing inside Xunaa Shuká Hít

Go online to learn more about Xunaa Shuká Hít, and enjoy a wealth of photos, videos, and background information on this significant project [www.nps.gov/glba](http://www.nps.gov/glba)

