Goldbelt Heritage

One Sealaska Plaza, Suite 201
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 790-1460
GHF@goldbelt.com

# Request for Proposal (RFP):

## Traditional Hide Tanning & Processing, Master Artist

RFP Issue Date: November 17, 2026
Proposal Deadline: December 1, 2026 5:00pm
Contract Period: January 15, 2027 through March 15, 2027; or otherwise agreed upon
Anticipated Start Date: Upon contract execution
Point of Contact: Miranda Bell, Culture & Arts Program Manager
miranda.bell@goldbelt.com

**OVERVIEW**

Goldbelt Heritage Foundation (GHF) seeks an expert traditional hide tanner and culture knowledge bearer to design and lead an intensive, hands-on training/apprenticeship for an adult/advanced student learning cohort of approximately five students. The purpose of this program is to sustain and transmit traditional hide preparation and tanning skills, strengthen community capacity, and support the continuation of Indigenous cultural knowledge across generations.

Instruction will address moose, deer, and seal hides, including species-specific preparation, preservation, processing, and tanning methods. Brain tanning must be a substantial instructional component for suitable hides. The instructor should be able to explain historically documented and community-taught practices alongside contemporary approaches, tools, health precautions, and practical adaptations, clearly distinguishing traditional techniques from modern alternatives.

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Cultural Knowledge Transfer & Educational Use

This program is intended as an advanced apprenticeship in traditional hide preparation, processing, and tanning, including hands-on instruction, supervised practice, and preservation of techniques for future generations. The instructor will explain traditional methods, assess apprentice proficiency, and honor the knowledge of Elders, families, clans, and communities while respecting cultural protocols.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

The Contractor will:

- Develop and lead a structured, hands-on training sequence for adult and student learners, with learning goals, demonstrations, guided practice, and opportunities for apprentices to develop independent competency.
- Teach hide identification, evaluation, lawful sourcing, handling, storage, cleaning, fleshing, scraping, dehairing or hair-on preparation, membrane removal, softening, stretching, drying, smoking/finishing where appropriate, and care of finished hides.
- Teach traditional brain tanning in depth for appropriate species and desired finished products, including preparation and application of dressing, repeated working/softening, troubleshooting, and finishing; explain species-specific limits and alternative methods where brain tanning is not appropriate.
- Provide dedicated instruction for moose hide preparation and tanning, including the greater physical demands, tools, space, and timing needed for large hides.
- Provide dedicated instruction for deer hide preparation and tanning, including options for hair-on or hair-off finishes and the factors that affect technique selection.
- Provide dedicated instruction for seal hide handling and preparation, including appropriate preservation, fleshing, fat removal, species-specific handling considerations, and traditional and contemporary finishing approaches that are culturally and legally authorized.
- Explain historical uses, material choices, tools, seasonal considerations, cultural context, and regional differences in traditional hide tanning; distinguish firsthand traditional knowledge, documented history, and contemporary adaptations.

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- Introduce modern knowledge relevant to effective and safe practice, including sanitation, personal protective equipment, ergonomics, tool maintenance, ventilation, wastewater/waste disposal, infection prevention, and responsible material management.
- Teach apprentices how to evaluate finished quality, identify common problems, adapt to different hide conditions, and plan the time and resources necessary to repeat the work.
- Prepare a realistic schedule that accounts for soaking, drying, softening, weather, biological variability, and other steps that may require work sessions spread over multiple days or weeks.
- Coordinate with GHF on site suitability, access to water, workspace, ventilation, storage/refrigeration or freezing, equipment, approved assistants, and apprenticeship participation.
- Supply a detailed materials and tools list, proposed hide sourcing plan, and budget in advance. GHF will make every effort to accommodate requested materials while reserving the right to select options consistent with grant requirements and funding availability.
- Provide brief end-of-project documentation of activities, attendance, apprentice competencies, and recommendations for future training, excluding culturally restricted information.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

Applicants should demonstrate:

- At least ten (10) years of substantial, demonstrable hands-on experience in traditional hide preparation and tanning.
- Expertise in traditional brain tanning and a proven ability to execute and troubleshoot complete hide-tanning workflows.
- Working knowledge of moose, deer, and seal hide preparation and tanning, including differences in material properties, handling, and appropriate finishing techniques; applicants must clearly identify any species-specific limits to their experience.

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- Demonstrated knowledge of historic and culturally transmitted hide-processing methods, together with current best practices and modern tools or adaptations.
- Experience teaching, mentoring, or apprenticing adults or advanced learners, with the ability to convey complex physical techniques through clear explanations, demonstrations, coaching, and repeated practice.
- Ability to identify cultural protocols, credit knowledge sources, and determine what information is appropriate for public or apprentice instruction.
- Ability to plan and safely manage instruction involving raw animal products, biological hazards, sharp tools, physically demanding work, and variable environmental conditions.
- Ability to provide references and a feasible scope, schedule, materials plan, and budget.

**PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS**

- Recognized traditional knowledge keeper, cultural practitioner, or master tanner with strong relationships to Alaska Native communities and demonstrated commitment to intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- Experience working with Southeast Alaska communities, Tlingit cultural practices, and regional hide-use traditions, where relevant to the curriculum.
- Experience training apprentices to continue or teach a traditional practice rather than only producing a finished item.
- Ability to integrate culturally respectful historical interpretation with modern animal-product handling, environmental care, and conservation practices.
- Relevant tribal artist credentials, professional portfolios, or community endorsements, where applicable.

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**CONTRACT TERMS**

**Location:** Juneau, AK
**Contract Period:** January 15, 2027 through March 15, 2027
(excluding weekends), 8:30 AM-5:00 PM.
**Estimated Time:** 3 weeks (adjusting as necessary for school calendar and when appropriate), approximately 8 hours of instruction and 30 hours of preparation time. Not to exceed 50 hours of work, unless otherwise arranged between contractor and GHF.
With prior approval, contractors may schedule extra hours after the intensive to finish projects with students.

Additional Instructor Support

***GHF is willing to provide up to $1,500 to compensate an additional teacher apprentice or classroom support person to assist with the art intensive.*** Any individual serving in this role must successfully pass a background check before working with students and must have prior approval from GHF before working with youth. GHF reserves the right for final approval of any teaching assistants or volunteers working under this contract. GHF supports the traditional passage of knowledge from artist to apprentice, and encourages apprentices in our work.

Artwork and Educational Use

The artist retains partial ownership of all original artwork and dance apron design created under this agreement. Goldbelt Heritage Foundation (GHF) is granted a non-exclusive, perpetual, royalty-free right to reproduce, display, adapt, and otherwise use the artwork/dance aprons for educational purposes, curriculum development, educational programming, student activities, and future educational work with students and Alaska Native youth. GHF shall not sell, license, or otherwise use the dance aprons or designs for commercial purposes without the

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artist's prior written permission. Any commercial use or sale of items must be explicitly approved by the artist. Any use of clan crests or culturally restricted designs must follow appropriate cultural protocols and be discussed with GHF before use.

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Relevant experience and qualifications
- Demonstrated understanding of the role
- Approach and professional capacity
- Availability and capacity
- References

GHF may request an interview with finalists.

**ADDITIONAL TERMS**

GHF reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals.
- Request clarification or additional information from applicants.
- Modify the scope of work before awarding a contract.
- Award a contract without an interview if deemed appropriate.
- Require a background check before contract execution or the start of work.

**PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Please submit:

- Letter of interest describing your approach to the intensive and your relevant cultural and artistic experience.
- Résumé, CV, or artist biography.
- Examples of hide tanning and processing if available.
- Description of relevant teaching or mentoring experience.

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- Proposed project cost, including hourly rate or total contract amount, estimated preparation and instruction hours, and any additional expenses.
- Proposed list of materials, tools, and supplies needed, with estimated costs and clarification of what the instructor would provide versus what GHF should purchase.
- Confirmation of availability for the proposed project period; or alternative dates proposed.

**Submit to:**

Miranda Bell
Culture & Arts Program Manager
Goldbelt Heritage Foundation
Email: miranda.bell@goldbelt.com
Subject Line: RFP – Hide Tanning and Processing
Deadline: December 1, 2026