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## **Ancient artifacts and cutting-edge ideas at the Abbe**

By Laurie Schreiber

The Abbe Museum has its eye on cutting-edge concepts in the engagement of visitors with exhibits, and a new director will soon be on board to further the museum's mission of community involvement.

Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko was in Bar Harbor recently with her family to look around their new home. They will be moving from their current home in Crawfordsville, Ind., so that Catlin-Legutko can assume the reins at the Abbe on June 1.



The Abbe Museum's new director, Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, right, will start June 1. With her is interim director Karen Foster. (Image courtesy of The Abbe Museum)

"I've known about the Abbe for quite some time, and I've always been a big fan," she said by phone during the family's drive back to Indiana. "The facilities are absolutely gorgeous."

Catlin-Legutko has been director of the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum in Crawfordsville since 2003. During that time, she led the National Historic Landmark from a seasonal operation to a year-round professional museum. She raised \$250,000 for the rehabilitation of the site's 19th century Carriage House for use as an interpretive center. In a 2008 White House ceremony, the Lew Wallace Study was awarded the National Medal for Museum Service, the nation's highest honor for museum achievement.

Previously, she was director at the Miami County Museum in Indiana where she oversaw a facade restoration of the property that is on the National Register of Historic Places, led a reinterpretation of four exhibits, implemented a five-year exhibit program and revitalized the Cole Porter Music Festival. In

2001, she established The LCL Company, a cultural resources consulting firm that specializes in collections management contract work, grant writing, organizational planning and historical research, and produces artifact-labeling kits to museums and other collecting organizations around the nation. She has authored a number of articles, is co-editor of the upcoming "Small Museum Toolkit," and published her first book, "The Art of Healing: The Wishard Art Collection," in 2004. Her record of service to the field includes serving on program and grant review panels and on a number of program committees of the American Association of Museums and the Association of Indiana

Museums, as well as national and regional conference and workshop presentations on strategic planning for small museums.

Catlin-Legutko calls herself a very strategic-minded person, and she plans to hit the ground running.

“I want to make sure I get the board and staff working together to meet the Abbe’s strategic plans and goals,” she said. “For me, it will be about planning and community involvement.”

One of the great successes in her current position, she said, has been the connections forged between the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum and the community.

“We’ve built advisory committees along the way, and that’s been incredibly important,” she said. “I see the same model at the Abbe, especially working with the tribes. I’d like to see what our supporters would like. It’s important to listen, to have conversations, and together move forward.”

In keeping with that spirit of community connection, the Abbe is now planning for a new approach to the museum-goer’s experience. A long-term trilogy of exhibits will be set up as “exhibitions without walls” that will start people out at the museum and then take them out on walking tours, using a “Wabanaki Trail” map to see places and landmarks on Mount Desert Island that are of cultural and historic significance. The first exhibition, from February 2010 to January 2012, will center on “Indians and Rusticators: Wabanakis and Summer Visitors on Mount Desert Island, 1840s-1920s.” The exhibition will be “character-driven” and will highlight the role that burgeoning 19th century tourism locations played in the cultural and economic survival of Wabanaki Indians.

In the planning stages for 2012 is “St. Sauveur and Chief Asticou on Mount Desert Island,” which will illustrate the political drama of colliding ideologies and economies; and, for 2014, “The Maritime World of Wabanaki Indians,” which will chronicle the Wabanaki’s coastal hunting, trading and raiding practices. The exhibits are based on a new 600-page National Park Service study of the history of Wabanaki Indians in the MDI area, written by anthropologists Bunny McBride and Harald Prins, who will also curate the series. All together, the trilogy will chronicle a historical relationship that covers 500 years.

This interactive concept provides a refreshing approach to the museum experience, said the Abbe’s interim director, Karen Foster.

The idea, she said, is to provide a thematic and educational exhibit at the museum itself, and then send folks to historic locations.

“This makes it more relevant,” she said. “It’s not just dusty, old artifacts.”

Of course, the Abbe ([www.abbemuseum.org](http://www.abbemuseum.org)) has an ongoing slate of offerings that is already pretty sizeable. As the only museum in the world dedicated to the Wabanaki, the Native American people of Maine and the Maritimes, the museum's collection encompasses more than 50,000 archaeological, historic and contemporary objects including stone and bone tools, pottery, beadwork, carved root clubs, birch bark canoes, and supporting collections of photographs, maps, and archival documents. It holds the largest and best-documented collection of Maine Native American basketry in any museum. Its collections conservation program is recognized nationally as a model for museums.

Exhibitions up now include "Twisted Path: Contemporary Native American Artists Walking in Two Worlds," a traveling exhibit of traditional arts, and the archaeological collection of Arthur and Nita Wood of Brooklin, who donated stone and bone tools, arrowheads, and pottery fragments.

The Abbe hosts many workshops and special events as well. Wednesday, July 15, will see The Gathering, a Reflection and Celebration fundraising gala, with cocktails, dinner, silent and live auctions, and music by Brian Catell and the Jump City Jazz Band at the Bar Harbor Club. On Saturday, July 11, the popular annual Native American Festival will be held from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at College of the Atlantic, with workshops taking place at the Abbe. A feature of the festival is its "Indian Market," with hand-crafted Wabanaki baskets, carvings, jewelry, beadwork, and dolls, as well as other hand crafted items. There will be Native American singing, dancing, storytelling, demonstrations, food, and a silent auction. Proceeds from the auction benefit the Maine Indian Basket Makers Alliance's education program.

Many offerings throughout the summer include birch bark art, native storytelling, carving, Atlatl throwing, traditional drumming and singing, birch bark canoe, beadwork, and basket-making; as well as workshops on how to make traditional beaded necklaces and bracelets, porcupine quill earrings, and dream catchers. The Storytelling Mural Project with the Laughing Couple Duo, on Saturday and Sunday, June 6-7, will be an interactive performance piece that will be a permanent addition to the museum. A Community Open House will be held on Sunday, June 7, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., to celebrate the launch of the summer season with a free visit, hands-on displays and traditional music.

The Abbe also offers programs for students and teachers, as well as an archaeology field school.