

Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991, is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Friends and Family everywhere
From: Cheri and Raven Hill
Date: October 1, 2022
Re: Outreach rewards

Greetings, Everyone!

Today's update features three special sculptures that came to be at Raven Hill Discovery Center in a rather interesting way. For those of you who drive long distances to work every day, you might appreciate this story. For over 20 years, during the school year, Raven Hill programs would go "on the road", traveling to various schools and occasionally to libraries. Before COVID, it was a great way to keep in touch with teachers, students and families in northern Lower Michigan and encourage hands-on science, particularly STEM and process skills, like problem-solving, creative and critical thinking skills. Traveling programs also encourage connections between science, history and the arts. It remains to be seen, if the Center's outreach programs will return post-COVID.

Many times, during these outreach programs, a piece of artwork would be chosen and installments paid, so that by spring there was a new piece of art to add to the Center's collection. It was a reward for all those hours spent preparing for lessons, gathering supplies and packing up the car, driving to and from locations, then unpacking and restocking the activity boxes upon returning to the Center. Hope you enjoy these three sculptures that are part of our art collection. All three were acquired different years as "outreach rewards"!

Soapstone, also known as steatite or soaprock, is a type of metamorphic rock, which is produced when rocks are changed by heat and pressure. Soapstone is composed mostly of the mineral talc. It has been a medium for carving for thousands of years. In pioneer times, small blocks of soapstone were heated on the cook stove or near the fire and used to warm cold beds or to keep hands and feet cozy while sleighing.



(Left) Raven Hill has a "timeline" of bed warmers from various ages in the Evolving Technology Building. Visitors can also find a soapstone bed warmer as part of the rock wall at the entrance to the Great Room in the Main Building.



This green heron is carved out of soapstone. Green herons are smaller than blue herons. They have short necks, while blue herons have long ones. They have a smaller range than the blue heron. Both green and blue herons hang out near wetlands areas. Our green heron sits perched atop a display case in the Great Room. Check him out, when you visit next time!

Alabaster is a fine-grained mineral known as gypsum. Alabaster has been used for centuries for statues, carvings, and other ornaments. It is normally snow-white and translucent. Gypsum alabaster is the softer of two varieties, the other being calcite alabaster, which was used for carving in medieval Europe. Gypsum is also used in modern times as fertilizer and is the main ingredient in plaster, drywall and sidewalk chalk. Sculptors, geologists, archaeologists and the stone processing industry all use the word gypsum in different ways.

(Right) Alabaster can be white or colored. The surface is very translucent and has no visible crystalline structure. It does not fluoresce under ultraviolet light, which is another way to distinguish it from marble or onyx.



When the early morning sun comes in the window, this alabaster "Spirit Rising" almost glows because of the mineral's translucency.

For centuries, the Kwakiutl Tribe in British Columbia enjoyed abundant food from the [Pacific Ocean](#) and surrounding forests. Because their need for food was easily met, the people were able to devote much of their time to artistic pursuits and ceremonies, such as gift exchanges or potlatches (now known as "potlucks"). The Kwakiutl were widely known for their totem poles, elaborate wooden houses, and seaworthy log canoes, as well as for dramatizing myths and performing magic tricks.



Artist Joe Peters Jr. carved this elaborate Raven and Chief bowl out of yellow cedar. The bowl can be seen in the Center's extensive Raven Art Collection located in Christopher's Art Corridor outside the Great Room.



Cross section of a yellow cedar tree

For more information on **FREE Second Saturdays**, plus onsite or outreach programs, email info@miravenhill.org or call Cheri at 231.536.3369.

Remember, next Saturday, October 8th is the **final FREE (Families Reaching for Educational Excellence) Second Saturday** for this year. Look for these special family days to return on May 13, 2023, when the weather warms up once again. The 2022 **FREE Second Saturdays** are in memory of Diane Strzelinski and provide free admission for families only. No groups please.

Hope to see you next weekend,

Cheri



2023 sponsors