



Sharing Our Pathways

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Alaska Federation of Natives ♦ University of Alaska ♦ National Science Foundation ♦ Rural School and Community Trust

Oral Traditional Knowledge: Does It Belong in the Classroom?

by Esther A. Ilutsik, Ciulistet Research Association

As local educators who are documenting the oral traditional knowledge of our ancestors and developing methods and means of bringing this information to our descendents through the public educational system, we are faced with many decisions that drastically affect the validity of this knowledge base that was once so fluid. Public schools represent a system that is foreign to the methods and means of transmitting this information in the past. We are constantly faced with decisions that affect how this knowledge will be passed on to our future descendents.

With questions like these always at the forefront of our minds we continue to document and develop materials for integration into the public educational system. With the adoption of the Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools, we need to begin making critical decisions that will affect the types of oral traditional knowledge that can be integrated into the public school system and how this information will be

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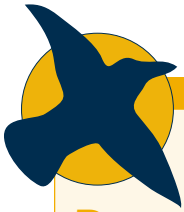


Michelle Snyder shares a story using the storyknife while Nia White looks on.

Many of us local educators have been through the Western educational system and have been taught the pedagogy of that system. Many of us have taken this very method of instruction and infused our local traditional knowledge as a means of educating our own people about our traditional culture. But we continue to ask ourselves, "Is this the proper way to get our oral traditional knowledge passed on to our descendents?"

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taught. As educators we are always looking at how other local cultural groups are addressing these very difficult issues.

On March 26–28, 2002, I had an opportunity to attend the Third Annual Native Hawaiian Education Association Convention at the Leeward Community College in Hawaii and present a workshop titled “Oral Traditional Knowledge: Does It Belong In The Classroom?” The session began with a brief introduction to Alaska with a special emphasis on the Yup’ik people of Bristol Bay, followed by a brief presentation on how traditional Yup’ik oral knowledge is documented and then presented within the classroom. This was followed with Michelle Snyder (my daughter), a ninth-grader from the Dillingham High School, presenting a paper on “Cultural Education in the Classrooms”. This set the stage for those participating in the workshop session (see opposite page).

Oral traditional knowledge—what is meant by that? Within the oral traditions knowledge was sacred. This knowledge encompassed all aspects of

life from birth to death, including the natural world and environment. This knowledge in the past was forever flowing to fit the needs of that age and time. It was so fluid that it could be defined in regional and subregional terms. As N. Scott Momaday put it:

Oral tradition stands in a different relationship to language. Words are rare and therefore dear. They are jealously preserved in the ear and in the mind. Words are spoken with great care, and they are heard. They matter, and they must not be taken for granted; they must be taken seriously and they must be remembered. Thus in the oral tradition, language bears the burden of the sacred, the burden of belief. In a written tradition, the

place of language is not so certain.

So the oral traditional knowledge of our people was sacred knowledge that was not passed down freely. It was passed down as the need arose with all the special circumstances in life that was lived and continues to be lived. In the past, the oral traditions of our people were not passed down to be documented and questioned, but rather it was passed down as the need arose and was practiced without question.

In this Western-influenced world we are constantly asked to categorize, so that we cannot simply say that the oral traditions encompassed LIFE, instead we need to be specific about the areas. The oral traditional knowledge that is collected and documented are the songs, dances, prayers, rituals, stories, limericks, medicinal plants, ceremonies, music, games, chants, relationship to animals, plants, water, fire and all living things and virtually

Within the oral traditions knowledge was sacred. This knowledge encompassed all aspects of life from birth to death, including the natural world and environment.

everything that affects all aspects of the living. All this knowledge, so sacred to our ancestors’ existence, is documented. Often, as local educators, we question within ourselves whether this is the proper way of preserving our knowledge. But we continue to document this knowledge and put it into the proper category for future reference.

We document how traditional knowledge was passed down and in some cases attempt to replicate those very practices. We know that the oral traditions of our people were passed down within everyday activities. For example, they were passed down by engaging in a ceremony or participating in the evening ritual of purifying the sod homes, or doing certain rituals

before the hunt or the gathering of wild edible plants. We know that many times, if our people needed to be reprimanded for an action or reminded of how one is to act, it was done through the oral stories that were shared within the sod homes or at the men's house. For there was a proper way of sharing this knowledge and passing it down. This knowledge was not studied but LIVED.

We, as local educators, now take this very sacred knowledge and attempt to bring it into the public classroom using the Western methods that are the basis for the educational system that is presented to us today. In some instances we attempt to replicate certain practices by actually participating within traditional cultural settings, but even these cultural camps can be strongly influenced by Western teaching methodology.

These circles of questions bring us again to the question, "Does oral traditional knowledge belong in the classroom?" This is what many of our local educators who are documenting the oral tradition of our people are asking themselves. Are we doing the right thing by documenting this knowledge and then making it available in written form to the general public for their use and judgment? How do we go about making sure that if this knowledge base is documented that it will be respected and understood by those of another cultural group? Whose responsibility is it to train our own local educators and those from another cultural group? How do we measure success in the understanding of the local cultural group?

We leave you all with many questions that each regional group will have to ask of themselves. We did not come up with answers, but these will have to come from within ourselves through our own local people. ✘

[For further guidance in addressing these difficult questions, refer to the Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network]

Cultural Education in the Classrooms

by Michelle Snyder, March 21, 2002

As long as I can remember, back in my elementary school years, my mother would come into my classroom to teach about Yup'ik culture. This is important to me and other Yup'ik children. It teaches us who our ancestors were and who we are today.

Every year beginning at kindergarten through the fifth grade, my mother has been teaching about our culture in the classroom. It's hard for me to remember as far back as kindergarten; mostly I remember learning Yup'ik dances and stories. My first strong memory is when I was in the second grade and we learned about the sonar legend board games; we learned stories and morals while playing the board games. I remember in later years learning dances, Yup'ik colors, story-knifing, Yup'ik patterns and grass-mat weaving.

The dances that I remember learning were the Porcupine Dance, the Agutak Dance and some others. We even made up our own dance by learning the Yup'ik words for the different months and forming it into what we called the "Calendar Dance". All of these dances told stories. We also had to make headdresses; we learned how to beat the drum and how to bounce our knees in rhythm. We listened to our heartbeats and applied that rhythm to the drum.

We learned about Yup'ik colors. They are red, black and white and are all found on Yup'ik clothing and artwork. The color red is to honor the mother. It represents the mother's blood. It is found in many places on the parka and other clothing and beading. White represents our great Yup'ik warrior, Apanuugpuk. During one of the great wars he was captured and force-fed caribou fat by his enemies. He escaped and while he was running away he regurgitated the fat. White can also represent snow. Black represents the unknown or shamanism. It can also represent the black fly.

Yaaruin—stories told with a knife in the mud—were another thing that we learned. We learned Yup'ik legends and how to tell them in the mud with knives, as our people did for entertainment when there was no television or computers. This included Yup'ik patterns, pretend windows, pretend mountains and pretend boxes. There are different patterns for each family. My Grandmother's pattern was a salmonberry leaf, so I have now inherited that pattern.

The last year that my mother came into my classroom was fifth grade. That year we learned about grass mats. We learned to split grass into three parts and found out that the middle part that we didn't use was referred to as a male, the other two parts were referred to as the female. We learned about different dyes, natural and store bought. We experimented to see which one would have the most color and last the longest. The natural dyes were berries and some other substances that I don't remember.

Learning about all this as a girl has helped me see who my ancestors were; I have learned about my culture and my language. It has helped me form a positive image about who I am and who my people are. It has made me proud that I am a Yup'ik Eskimo. With this knowledge I don't feel lost; I know who my ancestors were and that is so important to me. My only regret is that I couldn't learn more about my culture and my language but what I have I am grateful for; it helps me form my own self-image and helps my self esteem. It has made me who I am today. ✘

In The Maelstrom of Confusion, a Stilling Voice

by Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley

The spirit and pride of Native being has been struggling in a maelstrom of confusion due to the many people living with homeless minds, destitution, poverty, pestilence, war and dereliction of being, even as we live in the wealthiest nation in the world. You see, we have tried to comply with the wishes and dreamworks of a narcissistic society, but we have not been able to progress from the doldrums of uncertainty and hopelessness. However, a few of our American Indian and Alaska Native people have begun to see through the small channels in the blizzard and once we are able to see more clearly again, we will have something very important to share with the world.

We, as Native peoples, have always known that genotypes of all living things have micro-consciousness or micro-intelligence that enables them to communicate with one another and to work together for the good of the whole. Let me tell you why I think this is so. As a Yupiat, we have many rituals and ceremonies, some of which require special masks.

Some of the masks are human masks.

A few of these will have a third eye painted on the forehead. This eye we call Ellam iina, the eye of the uni-

verse, the eye of consciousness, the eye of awareness, thus intelligence. This says to me that the Great Consciousness, God if you wish, resides in my mind, and my consciousness is in the Great Consciousness. It is there that we find our collective memories and the power of our collective mindfulness. These essences of memory are imbued into the creatures, plants and elements of nature to remind and teach

us how to be people that live lives that feel just right.

Nature is our textbook as a Native people. In it we find wisdom to make a life and a living. In order to have dialogue with it we must listen for the still small voice within. To ensure growth of wisdom, we recognize that we need to be with those that we consider wise, most often the Elders.

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We know that we become that which we hold up and respect. How many times have you heard this truth! You and I, as educators, seek

through dialogue with those we admire, through reading all sorts of written media, through seeing videotaped media and through learning to read and communicate directly with nature. The information we gather requires that we sift through it to remove the chaff in the form of misdirected, misinformed and useless information which we or others may have interpreted wrongly. Knowledge is merely

information, but wisdom requires that we understand, become enlightened or aware and, as we grow, live what we know! This is what we learn from our wise Elders—this is wisdom.

This wisdom cannot be separated from the sacred—our Native spirituality. Wisdom is embedded in the sacred, thus we live it. Remember that wisdom also resides in you—look for

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it. As a Native person, you need your Native language to commune with nature and to describe it in its own terms. A Native friend of mine from the village of Minto told me that our Native languages are living languages and that if you don't use it, you are giving yourself away—relinquishing your identity. As a Yupiaq man, I have to draw on my Yupiaq language and mindset to feel the crispness of the snow, the balminess of a warm wind. I have to draw on my language to fully experience the mountains, the moon, the sun, the river, the spruce tree, the taste of Hudson's Bay tea, the wolf, the eagle and the paramecium—it is a living language! All these experiences with the language, along with the five senses and intuition, are necessary for my growth and my spirituality.

Barriers have to be removed for my continued growth, otherwise staleness follows. This is another reason why we must get the children out of the classrooms as much as possible to be with and in nature. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "Nature becomes (to man) the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not

yet possess. And, in fine, the ancient precept 'know thyself' and the modern precept, 'study nature' become at last one maxim." Get the children to see beauty in the flower, tree, butterfly, grass, stream, fish and, yes, the slug. These living things interact and cooperate. This process does not leave out the rocks and other elements of Mother Earth—they are all an integral part it. Let them begin to understand that we are here for a purpose, to contribute to the good of the tribe and be of service to others. This involves goodness of self, morality, joy, cooperation and happiness. We have Christ, Dalai Lama, Ghandi, Chief Peter John, Lyons and others who have the selfless love which is the stabilizer, the balancer of life. They are our role models.

Let the children think of all the good traits and skills that they possess. Someone has called these the "inner assets". They have talents and skills inherited from their ancestors with the Great Mystery working the genotypes to fit the place and conditions. This process needs our continued meditation and prayers for the still, small voice to let us know what else needs to be done. *Ellanginginartuqut*—we are becoming more aware!

The inner assets might include ability to interact effectively with others, intuitive perception, athletic skill, ability to observe and make sense of what is being seen, ability for abstract thinking, dexterity combined with mind, leadership skills, mindfulness of place, cooperation, showing love and humility and all the many other positive traits that children may possess. Not only must the children be guided to making a worthwhile living but to making a life that feels good to them as well. This is done through the mythology, stories, singing, dancing, drumming, place names and all the other rituals and ceremonies that have been handed down to us through many thousands of years. They must

be guided to living life to the fullest—a good and responsible life working to become the very best they possibly can while making a contribution to their community. Children who want to live a healthy and stable life will be contributors to a healthy, stable and sustainable community.

They (children) must be guided to living life to the fullest—a good and responsible life working to become the very best they possibly can while making a contribution to their community.

These inner assets of children have to be capitalized on for them to become the very best that they are capable of. They can become the very best hunter, medical doctor, electrician, artist, craftsperson or medicine person, but this has to be infused with liberal amounts of love, humility, compassion and open-mindedness. This means that love has balanced the outer

and inner ecologies of the young person. They work and experience place for the good of the community. We have to know place in order to know self, for place is our identity.

The last 500 years or so we have seen a maelstrom of confusion, a perfect storm! It is destructive because it is based on self-love, greed, hate and anger, which are in direct conflict with what nature teaches us. We must avoid personal narcissism just as we must avoid spiritual narcissism. We have to work for a balance. Some American Indian people refer to this as "Walking the Red Road", a very narrow path which guides us on that thin line between good and evil. We are gradually emerging from this maelstrom of confusion and getting on a pathway that feels just right!

We, as teachers, are not just repositories of knowledge, but serve as a role model and guide for the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of these children, our future. May the Ellam Yua, the Spirit of the Universe, give us guidance and direction in this most important role. ✨

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Native Languages in Alaska, Part II

by Ruthie Sampson

This is the second part of a keynote address to the 2002 Bilingual Multicultural Equity and Education Conference. The first part of the address can be found in the previous issue of Sharing Our Pathways (Volume 7 Issue 2)

Language of the Heart

I read a wonderful article by Marilyn Wilhelm about heart language and how the ancient languages spoke from the heart as God created us. I began to think of our Iñupiaq language. I thought of the word meaning “to think”: *Isuma-* or *isruma-*. *Isu-* or *isru-* is the end of something. *-ma* is “my” and I think then the literal meaning is “my end”. This could mean that everything about us reaches our mind, which is like our end. It is our source of thought. Then I thought of the word for eye which is *iri*. To exist is *it-*. When you add *-ri*, it’s a post-base that could mean something like “the means, the cause of”, so everything we see, we behold and in our mind, it exists when we see it. *Nakuagi-* means “to like” or “to love”. *Nakuu-* is “good” and when you *nakuagi-* something, you think that person or thing is good. It’s like saying, “I think good of you.” Isn’t that wonderful? See what beautiful languages we are struggling to save?

Not only are we trying to save our languages, but also our history. I have been so fortunate to have translated many narrations from our Elders. There are so many wonderful concepts and world views that they knew and that are being lost as each precious one dies, slowly, one by one. I remember one particular story that I like to share about an Elder named Susie Stocking from Kobuk. She recounted how they used to gather willow bark to make into net twine and how they would walk barefoot among the thorns in the heat of early summer, among mosquitoes and gather

the bark. They would pile it so high around their necks that you couldn’t see the person anymore. Then when they brought it down to the birch canoe, they had to keep the bark covered and moist the whole way through. All through the process, they had to keep the bark moist or else it would become brittle, dry and break off into little pieces. The remarkable statement that I remember from her narration is that she said in all the hard work they did, they just simply viewed their lives as being normal—they didn’t know that they were working so hard. Stories like these must be

documented and handed down from generation to generation because that is our rightful heritage.

It is not too late. If we are to empower our communities, we must validate the pain that our Elders experienced and help them walk through that process into healing and

... in all the hard work they did, they just simply viewed their lives as being normal—they didn’t know that they were working so hard.

forgiveness and a new resolve to speak the language and pass on the knowledge. God made us with forgiving hearts and we can help each other heal. So, that is one plan to get our parents to participate in the programs.

What about the schools and the education system? What can they do?

The AFN report on “The Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action” wrote on education: “In the words of the most thorough study to date of the federal and state school systems operated in Alaska from 1867 to 1970: policy makers over the years have vacillated between attempted assimilation of the Native population into white society and protection of their cultural identity.

Our history tells us this (from www.alaskool.org):

In 1886 the policy was that in all schools conducted by missionary organizations, it is required that all instructions shall be given in the English language.

In 1887, it said that the instruction of the Indians in the vernacular is not only of no use to them, but is detrimental to the cause of their education and civilization, and no school will be permitted on the reservation in which the English language is not

exclusively taught. “It is also believed that teaching an Indian youth in his own barbarous dialect is a positive detriment to him.”

In 1990, an article appeared in *Education Week*, that stated that federal officials were assessing the potential impact of a new law that encouraged the use of Native American languages in schools run by the BIA and in public schools enrolling Indians or other Native groups. Spokesman for the Interior and Education departments had said that the statement of federal policy contained in a bill approved by the congress without public hearings and signed into law by President Bush might well result in an invigoration of Native language instruction. But they also said that the intent of the new Native American Languages Act could prove costly and difficult to realize because of the vast number of Native languages and the paucity of Native speakers who have been trained as teachers. The article quoted John W. Tippeconnic III, who headed the Education Department’s office of Indian Education as saying, “On the one hand, it promotes the languages, which is positive, but it does create burdens for the schools.” The article further said that the law includes no penalties for noncompliance. But some officials had suggested then that it could provide legal ammunition for parents seeking Native language instruction, particularly in BIA schools and public schools with high concentrations of Native American students.

The measure declares that the policy of the United States (this is in 1990!) is “to preserve, protect and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages.” This act became public law 101-477 on October 30,

1990. The law states that the status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and the United States has the responsibility to act together with Native Americans to ensure the survival of these unique cultures and languages.

I remember being so excited when I read this bill. I thought there was

The law states that the status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and the United States has the responsibility to act together with Native Americans to ensure the survival of these unique cultures and languages.

going to be funding like Title VII that went with it. When I brought it to the attention of an administrator in Kotzebue, he looked at me and said, “Ruth, all this does is reverse the policy of 1887 which stated that Indian languages will not be taught.” He thought it was long over due, or maybe too late. In addition, there was no extra funding attached. All it basically did was say, “Oh, by the way, it’s okay to teach a Native language in the school now.”

In any event, in 1991, Senator Murkowski introduced the Alaska Native Languages Preservation and Enhancement Act. It was meant to preserve and enhance the ability of Alaska Natives to speak and understand their Native languages.

Today, under the Administration for Native Americans, there is limited funding for people to apply for grants to administer language programs, but they have to be applied for by the Native corporations or IRA offices, though they can do a joint project with the school. The problem is that there is very limited funding in this and it is competitive nationwide

amongst Indian tribes. Several years ago, they started out with something like one to two millions dollars available on a competitive basis among all the Indian tribes in the nation. We applaud Senator Murkowski and his staff for this legislation.

In July 2000, Senator Lincoln worked with the Alaska legislators to pass SB 103 “Native Language Education Act.” This requires Native language curriculum advisory boards for each school in the district in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives. If the board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum for a school, the regular school board will initiate and conduct a Native language education curriculum within grades K–12 in that school. We thank Senator Lincoln for her hard work to have this bill passed, but there is no additional funding attached.

In the meantime, What has happened with the state bilingual regulations? All this time, the whole intent of the bilingual education is to improve the English language of the student, always talking about exiting them out of the program as soon as possible.

Now the regulations say you can have a two-way immersion program but 50% of your students who come in have to speak the Native language. So only if the parents teach them and they enter the school that way can you get an immersion program funded. Otherwise, if they come to school speaking English, even if it is village English, then they just have the English programs available as an option.

So we need to get our programs identified as Native language programs by the village advisory board, but there is no special funding attached and if the school board decided not to have it, then that’s it again.

As Native people who believe in
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bilingual education, we must work together for funds to be allocated for the “Native language education act” to be implemented.

So how does all this relate to our students who must live in this modern world and not lose their Native identity? If we believe our theme that bilingual education and cross-cultural education are tools for community empowerment and academic success let us remember the following recommendations.

The 1990 AFN report on the “Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action” wrote on education:

- ♦ Children are the most important segment of any community, for each community’s future lies in its children. To assure that future, the children must be given, through education, the skills that will enable them to succeed in life and the understanding that will continue the community’s values. For Alaska Native children, this means that they must receive an integrated education that encompasses two sets of skills and two sets of values.
- ♦ The first set of skills is that it is necessary for the children to succeed in traditional Native life ways. The second set of skills is that it is necessary for the children to succeed in Western society. The children’s education must also integrate Native and Western values so that they are empowered in both cultures. The skills and values are inseparable, for mastery of one cannot be obtained without mastery of the other.
- ♦ This ideal of an integrated education has not been achieved, or even accepted, in the past. Alaska Native children enter an education system developed by Western culture. In past years the system had eradication of Native culture as one of its objectives. Even after this misguided goal was aban-

doned, the system still proved unable to meet its own fundamental objective: education of Native children in the skills and values necessary to succeed in Western society.

Those are the words conveyed by past Elder Chester Seveck, who advised us to take the good parts of the Iñupiaq culture and the good parts of the Western culture and blend them together for an integrated education. So how does bilingual education help us toward community empowerment? What is community empowerment? Let us take a moment now and visualize an empowered community with students learning to cope and succeed in the 21st century.

To me, an empowered community in the villages of Alaska means a community where children are well taken care of and they get enough sleep, enough food and their clothes are clean. They eat well and go to school on time and are hardly ever absent. Their parents take time to plan activities for them and train them to develop habits that result in good character traits. For example, they take them on long hikes on the tundra so that they can learn the value of hard work. They take them fishing so they can learn patience. They feed them wholesome foods, including Native foods so that they can be healthy and strong and realize what good health is. They speak their Native language to them and tell them stories and their people’s history. If they don’t know this, they take them to someone who can. They limit watching TV and playing electronic games. They monitor how the computer is used by the children. They provide time for them to do their homework and teach them to pray. They cook food and have the children bring some food to a needy person or an Elder. When they hunt and gather, they also have the children bring the food to share with others. They make sure that they know who their relatives

are. Although they enjoy snow machining, skiing and other outdoor sports; they also make sure that their children can build an outdoor fire and survive if they had to live off the land in an emergency. In all of this, they speak respectfully to others, especially Elders. They show that helping Elders is necessary and important. If they have the opportunity, they allow their children to learn about the world outside and travel with them. They speak respectfully of teachers and other people in the community who work to help everyone else. An empowered community is where the children graduate from high school and go on for more training or school and still feel comfortable to come back to the village and work in jobs that pay well so that they can enjoy all the outdoor activities that our back doors in Alaska can provide. An empowered community has school systems that work to accommodate the needs of their students, including the provision of the child’s language and culture being integrated into the curriculum.

That is my idea of how the lives of our children could be improved in an empowered community. Let us begin to visualize this empowered community and share the vision with our children. And in the words of John Pingayak of Chevak: “Our ancestral ways are always best for our future. Never forget them and learn them well . . .”

Thank you. ✨

Ruthie Tatqaviñ Ramoth-Sampson is the Bilingual Education Coordinator for the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. She is the daughter of Ralph and Emma Ramoth from the village of Selawik. She is married to Luke Sampson and has four children and five grandchildren.

AISES State Science Fair

Students brought science projects from every corner of the state to the annual ANSES State Science Fair at Camp Carlquist outside of Anchorage on Feb 4–7. Most projects had already been judged in regional fairs and represented the best of the best.

Juneau, Circle, Arctic Village, St. Paul on the Pribiloff Islands, Port Lions on Kodiak Island, Kiana, Selawik and Nulato all competed in the third annual ANSES Science Fair. Twenty projects, some individual, some team, some experiments, others demonstrations went head to head, judged by two teams of Western scientists and two teams of Native Elders. It was fairly easy for the Western scientists to agree on the scoring, and it was also easy for the Native Elders, as they both had different scoring rubrics, but when they met to agree on the Best of Show, there were no projects in common. The dialog and interaction between them was intense and rich. As one teacher said, “I wish I could have been a fly on the wall to listen in.” Only the personal nature of the discussion keeps this interaction from being the teaching event of the year.

Best of Show winners were: *Devil’s Club Salve* by Kami Wright and Amanda Padron of Juneau. Their tests indicated that the traditional salve made from Devil’s Club is more effective than modern medications on skin conditions like eczema.

Scott Asplund and Ronald Mayo of Circle discovered that natural furs are much more efficient insulators than artificial furs in their project, *Fake vs. Real Fur*.

John Melovidov and Maria Philemonoff of St. Paul on the Pribiloff Islands tested the fur of stellar sea lions vs. seal and discovered that the seal fur is a much better insulator. Their project was called *Otariidae Warmth*.

Ely Cyrus of Kiana did extensive research among Iñupiaq Elders in his project on *Weather Predicting*.

Other projects in the state fair were: *Osmosis and Why Salmon Turn Color in Fresh Water*, by John Carroll from Circle.

Reflexes by Alicia John from Circle *Surface Tension (Why Slough Bugs Walk on Water)* by Justin Mayo and Tyler Ely.

Magnetic North, improvising a compass in the woods by Billy John.

Blubber vs. Feathers, comparing insulating qualities by Rachel Searls and Airana McDonough of Juneau.

Antibacterial Properties of Sphagnum Moss, by Rena Dalman, Courtney Wendel, Myshelle Pope and Brandon Roulet of Juneau.

Helping Hands, Traditional Iñupiaq Massage for Health Problems, by Earl Ramoth and Lindi Skin of Selawik.

Stinkweed/Wormwood, Health Properties, by Ester Dexter and Kathleen Skin of Selawik.

Parts of a Net by Austin Gerhardt-Cyrus of Kiana.

Traditional vs. Modern Diapers by Lexy Staheli.

Caribou and Moose, Traditional Uses, by Vivian Shellabarger.

Fish Trap Construction, by Shayla Carney, Albert Gilbert, Belynda Gilbert and Jessica Tritt of Arctic Village.

Traditional Uses of Spruce Pitch by Summer Stickman from Nulato.

Deadfall vs. Box trap by Greg Lukin of Port Lions.

Plants with Vitamin C by Anna Nelson of Port Lions.

Traditional Barabara vs. Modern

Housing: Heat loss, by Sophia Zaharof, Brandon Rukovichnikoff of St. Paul.

Junkyard Wars of Science Fairs

Adrenaline ran high on the first day of gathering materials for the Junkyard Wars, which made its debut at this year’s ANSES Science Fair. Fashioned after the popular TV show, teams of four students had from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. to plan, research, experiment and prepare a poster board to compete at 7 P.M. No one knew what the project would be until the clock started ticking. When they learned that they had to do an experiment with a traditional drum from their region, teams feverishly planned as chaperones drove to the various locations in the Eagle River/Anchorage area. Map skills were developed as students learned to navigate in this strange landscape. Some teams experimented with types of materials for the drum head, others with frame size, others with head tension, others with combinations of all three as well as different drumming sticks. Display boards were not perfect and reports were highlighted photocopy pages from different libraries, but judges were amazed at the depth of scientific knowledge students were able to assemble in the short time allowed. All team members had to participate in the demonstration and most groups had a song and native dance for the judges to accompany the newly constructed drums. The students from Port Lions won first place and Arctic Village second.

While the projects for the State Fair were high quality with the top four going to AISES Nationals in Albuquerque, the Junkyard Fair provoked an intense level of creativity and excitement. Both fairs worked together to send students to the airport with a sense of accomplishment that is impossible to describe. ✨

Southeast Region: SEATC & SEANEA

by Ted A. Wright

Becoming Native to a Place

The mission of the Southeast Alaska Tribal College (SEATC) and the Southeast Alaska Native Educators (SEANEA) is to open our ancestors box of wisdom, knowledge, respect, patience and understanding. The *box of knowledge* is a Tlingit metaphor that reinforces the need to pass on to our children the wisdom and strength of our culture through education. Among the goals of SEANEA are to put in place programs and resources to inspire and assist educators in all districts of the region to use Southeast Native culture in their classrooms and schools and also to realize that the community and surrounding area are their best resources for effective learning.

These are worthy and fitting goals. Among the clans and tribal communities of Southeast Alaska, education has traditionally been built upon an intimate knowledge of diverse people in relation to culturally and historically unique places. The tribal college in Southeast Alaska will soon develop certificate and degree programs founded on principles of place-based education, inspired by and modeled after traditional Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian ways of knowing. For this reason, the programs of SEATC will be designed around a deep understanding of place. In this way, students who matriculate at the tribal college and take science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) courses will become more aware of their place in traditional *and* modern societies. As their knowledge of the area in which they live grows along with their understanding of the world outside, students will gain personal wisdom and live with increasing respect, patience and understanding.

In a like manner, the Southeast Alaska Native Educators Association will work with districts to help teach-

ers develop a pedagogy of place and infuse their curriculum with local and tribal wisdom. As funding and connections between districts and teachers grow, the standards we use to measure student progress will blend academic and cultural priorities, methods, and resources.

Current Programs

The Southeast Alaska Tribal College and the Southeast Alaska Native Educators Association have developed two core curricular programs to date:

I Am Salmon

A multilingual, cultural and national curriculum project with participants in Japan, Russia, Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia and Washington, designed to develop a sense of place (in one's watershed) and a sense of self (in the circle of life) and an understanding of how they are connected. *I Am Salmon* teams are developing curricula and other resources including Tlingit cultural atlases, electronic Tlingit language and salmon part drills and Tlingit plant and salmon

units. At the higher education level, SEATC will use project curriculum to reorient their classes toward a Native and Tlingit perspective and to train faculty in the development of courses more in line with the mission and worldview that will inform all the college's programs.

GIS Cultural Place Names Mapping

Recognizing the importance of documenting traditional ways of knowing based on an intimate relationship of Native people to their homelands, the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative has sponsored cultural mapping projects in each region of Alaska. In the Southeast region, digital atlases with Tlingit place names and numerous culturally-relevant links have been developed with several communities still in the process of establishing their maps. Once completed, educators will have a geographic, cultural framework for building curriculum and guiding instructional practice.

The importance of these atlases lies in the process it takes to complete them. Educators work with Elders and local culture-bearers using technology to document the importance of specific places through stories, songs and art passed down through generations. Though some of the knowledge contained in these maps has to be protected from the general public, the majority of information provides an invaluable framework for college faculty to immerse students in local culture as they put Western knowledge into Alaska Native perspective. The SEATC/SEANEA partners will expand the use of Geographic Information Systems, cultural mapping technology and web-based course development to enhance sci-

ence, technology, engineering, math, social studies and other offerings.

Planned Academic Programs

- Grade 11–14, Alaska Native School-Within-a-School, in cooperation with Southeast school districts, Alaska Department of Education and the University of Alaska Southeast. This would include development of a GED program as well as an expanded Early Scholars program. The school-within-a-school would provide a seamless transition to college.
- Development of a Tlingit language teacher certificate program in cooperation with the University of Alaska Southeast, Alaska Native Language Center (UAF), Sealaska Heritage Institute and Southeast tribal ANA grantee partners.
- Work with the University of Alaska to offer Alaska Native and Rural Development and Cross-Cultural Studies degree programs through the tribal college. This would entail a concurrent effort to have UAF/UAS or some other institution to agree to formally sponsor SEATC as a candidate for accreditation.
- Join with the Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Alaska Schools (PITAS) program and the School of Education at the University of Alaska Southeast to recruit and train teachers in traditional place-based pedagogy and practice.
- Develop a Native theatre/storytelling program in partnership with Ilisagvik College, Perseverance Theatre and the University of Alaska Southeast. The partnership will build upon existing, successful, programs such as Beyond Heritage (Perseverance Theatre), the Barrow Theatre Ensemble and the Associate Degree Program Partnership with UAS and Perseverance Theatre.

Partnerships for Today and Tomorrow

SEANEA/SEATC

University of Alaska Sheldon Jackson College

Southeast Alaska School Districts

When considering the resources it takes to develop unique programs such as those described here, SEATC and SEANEA leaders acknowledge the importance of training, technology and strong partnerships between multiple educational institutions and

tribal communities. For this reason, the focus will remain on nurturing partnerships that will stand the test of time. In this way, our institutions as well as our students will become native to this place. ✨

Iñupiaq Region: ARCTIC Immersion

by B. Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle

Last year in April, I had an opportunity to apply for the ARCTIC (Alaska Reform in the Classroom through Technology Integration and Collaboration) program through the Nome school district. I was one of two teachers who were invited to go to Juneau for one month.

Twenty teachers from throughout Alaska were immersed in the use of technology in the classroom. The ARCTIC project I produced is on a “Weather Forecasting Unit”. The project teaches upper elementary students how to predict weather in various ways. They learn to compare weather forecasting using traditional Iñupiaq ways and modern equipment used by the weather stations.

I chose this theme since it has made a positive impact both with students and parents. In the past, students were assigned to observe the moon and stars as homework. Parents were involved by helping their child. Both were involved in the

learning process.

The web site I developed for my students shares how the Iñupiat have learned to predict weather by observing the moon, stars, sun, wind and clouds. The web site includes Iñupiaq terms the students will be studying. While the students are studying and observing these items, they form a data chart comparing their findings. The web site address can be found at www.nomeschools.com. From there, go to Nome Elementary School, then to Fifth Grade and finally go to Mrs. Alvanna-Stimpfle’s teacher page. There you will find the Traditional Weather Prediction unit. ✨

Yup'ik Region: Teggneret Tegganret

by Tacuk and Yurliq (aka Cecilia Martz and Nita Rearden)

Back in February, during the NEC/BMEEC conferences, a group of statewide Elders taught many lessons. In indigenous cultures everything is intertwined, connected, whole. So in their presentations the Elders intertwined the different subjects that Western education separates out in school: math, science, social studies, geography, language arts, parenting skills, child development, medicine, vocational training, etc. Their short presentations also provided solutions to the problems, solutions that are just being “re-discovered” today. The Elders already knew these educational processes because they grew up with them: mentorship, project-oriented and hands-on experiences, repetitive teaching, learning with the seasons, community involvement, immersion and cooperative learning.

Here are a few excerpts from what they presented. Most of them made their presentations in their own languages, so someone had to interpret for them.

“” Ayaginareq John Phillip, 77, Kangirneq

- When my mother would put my footgear on in the morning, she would advise me on how to behave during the day. The most important advice was always to love other people.
- We went to the Qasgiq to listen and learn from the Elders who were constantly teaching.
- Don't live your life without a guide/mentor because you won't live right.
- Be watchful and always be aware. Be aware of everything around you and never forget them. Listen to oral teachers.
- My father taught me about our

environment. I had to use all my senses to learn what I was being taught.

- I bring my grandchildren and great-grandchildren out and teach them.

“” Cungauyaraq Annie Blue, 85, Tuyuryaq

- Apurin used to assemble us to teach. He would advise us never to forget what we heard/learned. If a person departed while being taught, he/she is shortening his/her life. They are like spoiled fish.
- A married man should live without internal anger, even when his children go astray.
- Our teachings are the truth.
- Follow our way of life and love each other.

“” Kaayistaan Marie Olsen, 77, Juneau

- It is difficult to raise children who

follow another way of life.

- Fishermen are scientists. They learned all about fish. They can even identify their type by how they jump out of the water. They know where animals are.
- All should take care of themselves and appreciate everything.

“” Igvaq Pauline Hunt, 73, Qerrullik

- Even though people do not know their ancestors, they follow in their footsteps.
- Our learning environment is our wilderness. Camping is learning through the seasons. Even though you don't attend Western school, we educate you. My mother taught me what a woman has to know and my father taught me what a man has to know.

“” Paniguaq Peter Jacob, 79, Cukvagtuli

- Educators, teachers, administration . . . when they have inservice training, they should include the Elders. That way they learn to support and help each other.

“” Qaggun Mary Lou Leavitt, 81, Barrow

- Speak only in our languages. Speak to grandchildren in our languages because their abilities decrease as they grow older. Our grandchildren and great grandchildren can learn to be truly bilingual. Pass on the language.
- It is very hard to watch our young people live the way they live these days.

“” Lubova Lucille Davis, 78, Kodiak Island/Karluk

- Things have changed. The young people today ask for payment. It is very difficult to practice reciprocal learning.
- Always give a child a chance. They can be so proud of their accom-

plishment no matter how small. Children learn from their parents. Listen to each other.

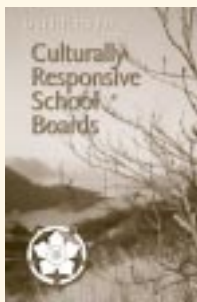
Keixwnei Nora
Dauenhauer, 74, Juneau

- Everyone guided the children, not only the parents. Everyone raised the children.
- All the women used to know how to make baskets. The men were super carvers. We can teach our children.
- There are 20 languages in Alaska. When they go it will be a terrific loss. We can't go home, like the Europeans, to learn our languages. We are home.

Neegoots Robert Charlie,
70+, Minto

- I am the founder and director for the Old Minto cultural camp. We teach cultural heritage and continue to pass on our traditional knowledge.

These are just a few excerpts from the Elder's wisdom which should be listened to and acted upon daily. They follow the culturally-responsive standards while teaching. ✨



Coming soon!

Guidelines for Culturally-Responsive School Boards

A new set of guidelines has been developed addressing the role of school boards in providing a culturally-responsive education for the students under their care. The guidelines are available now on the ANKN website or in booklet form this summer. For information, contact the ANKN office at 474-5086.

Alutiiq/UnangaĀ Region: Mask Carving

by *Sven Haakanson, Jr.*

The carving of masks for dances and storytelling nearly disappeared entirely from practice in the Kodiak Island region. However, this has changed. Over the past ten years, Alutiiq people have rediscovered, relearned and are now recreating traditional masks to be used in dances, given as gifts and to be sold. This spring, the Alutiiq Museum, thanks to support from the Rockefeller Foundation's Partnership Affirming Community Transformation (PACT) grant and a partnership with the Kodiak Island Borough School District, is bringing a traveling mask exhibit and carving workshop to villages on Kodiak. We will spend an entire week working with students and adults, showing them how to care for and use carving tools and how to carve traditional Alutiiq masks. Our goal with this program is not to just exhibit masks, which were historically taken away as curiosity pieces, but to inspire individuals into once again taking up this practice and revitalizing the art of mask making.

We have received wonderful comments from the students. One young lady from the remote village of Akhiok, wrote: "This will be good for the future because what we paint on the mask will tell the next generation what we did. It's like telling a story in a book but it's on a mask. We want this mask carving to go on. It should never get lost. We are the responsible ones to keep this fun tradition going." Mary L. Simeonoff, 12th grade.

Her written words signify more of an effect than we ever expected to achieve.



In traditional Alutiiq dancing, Dustin Berestoff wore a mask to portray the boogie man in "Unuku, unuku", "Tonight, tonight, I will bring a little tea with me, my love and don't you think I am a boogie man."

As we have relearned more about our heritage we have begun a new era for our youth in promoting pride, cultural knowledge and respect for our ancestors. If you would

like to learn more about our programs or have questions, please check our web site: www.alutiiqmuseum.com, or contact us at 907-486-7004. ✨

Athabascan Region: Tribute to the Minto Elders

This is the third part of a tribute to recognize the Minto Elders for their valuable contributions to the Cross-cultural Camp in Old Minto each year and for sharing their culture with all of us. Descriptions are from interviews with Elders, compilation of descriptions written by Minto students for the Denakkanaaga Elder-Youth Conference 2001, the Minto Cultural Atlas and from other sources. Photos are from the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute archives, unless otherwise marked.

© Photo by Rob Amberg, Rural School & Community Trust



Berkman Silas

Berkman Silas was born December 23, 1923 at Old Minto. His education went to the third grade. He says that school was held in a log cabin and there wasn't enough room so he left. When he first began working he worked for one dollar a day. He worked for the Nenana Railroad for a month then began working on the steamer *Nenana* on the Yukon River. He worked there every summer. Berkman believes that the land is the most important thing today.

Sarah Silas

Sarah Silas was born December 28, 1924 at Old Minto. She has grown up and lived in Minto for most of her life. When she was five years old her parents moved to the Yukon River area and they lived in Rampart and Stevens

Village for about six years. During that time there were no schools, but then one was built in Stevens Village and she began her education there. Sarah is active in all community events and served as the health aide for sixteen years. Sarah married Berkman Silas in 1944; together they had 12 children, six girls and six boys. Sarah remembers the Old Minto village as working together a lot, everything was volunteer work, nobody was paid wages. "Most of the time we celebrated



Thanksgiving, Christmas and the dog races in March. March 17th was a big holiday, that's when the dog race would happen. That was our entertainment growing up."



Robert Charlie

Robert Charlie was born May 25, 1927 in Montana Creek Camp (a muskrat camp). He is the youngest boy of the eleven children of Moses and Bessie Charlie. Robert lived in Old Minto and attended school up until about the sixth grade. When he was 15, he started helping his dad with a wood contract he had for the Alaska Railroad. When he was 17 (during WWII), he started working summers on the *Riverboat Nenana*. At 29, he decided to leave Minto and learn how to survive on his own. He went to Tanacross for ten years, got married, had a daughter there and worked for the Post Office. In 1964 he moved to Fairbanks and attended a two-year training program on Eielson Air Force Base as a waste and water treatment operator. The 1967 flood occurred during his time at Eielson and he was awarded a medal for working every day during the flood. He relocated to Ft. Wainwright's water treatment operations until 1973 when he went to work for the pipeline as a waste/water treatment plant operator in Prudhoe Bay and Valdez. In 1980 he worked for the Seth-De-Ya-Ah Minto Village Corporation; in 1984 he worked with Tanana Chiefs Conference as a realty technician. During this time, he served as a board member of Seth-De-Ya-Ah and started the idea of including Old Minto under a non-profit organization. The Cultural Heritage and Edu-

cation Institute (CHEI) was founded in 1984 and the Old Minto camps began in 1988. Robert is a musician, he likes to present and be part of the changes that are taking place among the Alaska Natives, whether educational or economic. Robert says, "It is important for future leaders of Native Alaskan people to start thinking about doing what is best for themselves as well as their neighbors. Stay clean and sober and always be mindful of other people. Always respect and honor the Elders because they were our teachers and trainers on how to be Alaskan Native people."

Virgil Titus

Virgil Titus was born March 21, 1938 in Fairbanks to Matthew and Dorothy Titus. Growing up in the Minto Flats, each April they would go to Muskrat Camp to hunt 'rats for food, clothing and money. When they



went back to the village they would get ready to leave for fish camp and they would stay there from June to August. They would dry fish for the winter and when they got back to the village they would sell some. Then they would go moose hunting to provide the family with meat for the winter. When they shot a moose they would dry it and ration it over the winter with all kinds of berries. They would then move back to the village in the month of October. From November to January he would go trapping and from February to March

they would snare and trap beaver. Virgil was educated in Old Minto. His employment history includes working as a plumber and carpenter all over the state of Alaska. Virgil's hobbies include hunting and listening and playing music. This past fall, the participants in the Cultural Atlas field trip stayed at Virgil's fall camp at Washington Creek.

Vernell R. Titus

Vernell R. Titus was born on February 1, 1941, somewhere in the Minto Flats to Peter Jimmie and Ena Jimmie. Vernell went to school until the tenth grade. Vernell's family used to move to spring camp in April or May and in June, they would move back to Minto and get ready for fish camp. Her mother used to make birchbark baskets for tourists and this is how Vernell learned to make baskets. In July they would make dry fish for the winter

and would sell some of it to the store for groceries. In the fall everyone would go out hunting for moose. Vernell married Virgil Titus and together they had seven children and have raised several grandchildren. After Vernell married, each November she and Virgil would start going out hunting for muskrat, mink and beaver. In the fall, they would go out

berry picking and save them for winter. Vernell has worked in Valdez, Fairbanks and Minto as a housekeeper, cooks helper and a kitchen helper. Vernell is known for making excellent fry bread over a campfire.

Luke Titus

Luke Titus was born in July 1941 in the Tanana Hospital to Elsie and Robert Titus. He grew up in Old Minto and went to school there until he was 12. He went to the Wrangell Institute and then attended high school at Mt. Edgecombe. He was influenced by

the Athabascan fiddling he heard growing up and he likes dancing. He says "fiddle music stuck to me." He remembers that in Old Minto, people cared for each other. The children were given chores to take care of people, particularly the Elders, like cutting wood or carrying water. They would be paid with a piece of pilot bread. He has worked on the Alaska Railroad, firefighting and for BLM doing land surveys for Native allotments. He attended seminary in Arizona and was ordained in the Episcopalian Church in 1970. In Arizona, he met and married his wife



Alice, a Navajo. They have five children and four grandchildren. He has always believed it is important to integrate Native culture in the church with dancing and singing since it is a healthy thing to do. Luke is a certified counselor and he was active in the start up of the Old Minto Recovery Camp. He supports the Culture Camp in Old Minto and thinks it is good so people in education can learn about the Athabascans. He is currently the chair of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District Board. He likes to help young people learn about their culture and background, especially those who may have lost their family. He finds that young people are always interested in finding out who they are and where they come from. ✨

Thirteenth Inuit Studies Conference in Anchorage

The Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development (DANRD) at UAF will be the primary host of the 13th Inuit Studies Conference to be held at the University of Alaska Anchorage on August 1–3, 2002. DANRD is working in collaboration with UAA in organizing the event. The central theme of the conference will be *Voices from Indigenous Communities: Research, Reality & Reconciliation*.

For several generations Inuit communities have been the subjects of scientific research from virtually every scientific discipline. In most cases this research was designed and carried out by non-indigenous researchers without any meaningful input from indigenous peoples. Often, the indigenous people being researched had no idea what the objectives of the research were and what benefits, if any, the research could bring to the community. In many instances the hard feelings brought on by this practice caused a stifling of important and legitimate research because indigenous peoples were no longer will-

ing to accept projects that they had no ownership in. In recent years more attention has been placed on research ethics with a particular emphasis on the concept of informed consent. Collaborative research projects involving indigenous peoples and Western scientists are now increasing in number. There is still much to learn, however, and the 13th Inuit Studies Conference will focus on successes in research involving indigenous people and provide opportuni-

ties for scientists and indigenous peoples to discuss these important issues. Papers and presentations that include both scientific researchers and indigenous people are particularly encouraged.

Indigenous researchers and others who had successful examples of collaborative research models were particularly encouraged to submit session proposals or paper abstracts. Among the suggested sessions and topics were Western science and indigenous researchers, research ethics, community-based research, rights to technology, use of traditional knowledge in research, youth and Elders, traditional healing in Inuit communities, strategies for Inuit language preservation, self-determination and self-governance and development of healthy communities.

Contact Gordon L. Pullar at g.pullar@uaf.edu for additional information. ✕

13TH INUIT STUDIES CONFERENCE
University of Alaska Anchorage
August 1-3, 2002

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