

Leave No Language Behind

presented by Sally and Sperry Ash* at the 29th Annual Bilingual Multicultural Education/Equity Conference, Anchorage, Alaska, February 5, 2003



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Sally and Sperry present at the 29th
Annual Bilingual Multicultural
Education/Equity Conference
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amai, gui ataqa Kuku, nupugpakarpilama quyanakcagyumiamci nupugt'sllunuk mugtamllu unuarpak. Sugpia'ukuk Nanwalegmek nupugcilluki Sugpiat taumi Aluttit. Guangkuta uturpet Sugt'stun. Sungq'rtukut Nanwalegmek ernerpak ililillemta aualarnirt'slluku litnaurwik Sugt'stun. Katia Brewster, Ataka Moonin taumi Guitka Guangkuta Dynamic-kegkut, guangkunuk allu kimnuk, nanluta. Cali tainenguk Nanwalegmek Acuuk Kvasnikoff taumi Qelni Swenning.

Camai! My name is Sally Ash. Before I go on I would like to thank you very much for letting us speak here this morning. We are from Nanwalek and we are representing the Sugpiaq people from the Alutiiq-Sugpiaq region. Our Native language is Sugt'stun. There are some people from Nanwalek today that helped us get the immersion program started: Kathy Brewster, Rhoda Moonin and Sperry Ash. We are a dynamic team, not just the two of us, but all of us. Also a couple of people who didn't make it are Natalie Kvasnikoff and Emlie Swenning.

I am Sugpiaq-Russian born to Sarjus and Juanita Kvasnikoff. I was born and raised in Nanwalek, which used to be known as English Bay. I didn't realize it but as I was growing up, my village was slowly changing from Sugpiaq to a more Western lifestyle. Forty-five years ago big changes came to Nanwalek—a big BIA school was built. Speaking only Sugt'stun, to me it was exciting, new and bright but the teachers who came were different—frightening, authoritative and appearing superior to my grandparents, aunties and uncles or

^{*} Sally Ash teaches in the Nanwalek Sugt'stun Preschool. Sperry Ash received his Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in 2002 and is continuing on toward his master's degree from UAF.

Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative

Ray Barnhardt, Co-Director

University of Alaska Fairbanks ANKN/AKRSI PO Box 756730 Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730 (907) 474-1902 phone (907) 474-1957 fax email: ffrjb@uaf.edu

Oscar Kawagley, Co-Director

University of Alaska Fairbanks ANKN/AKRSI PO Box 756730 Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730 (907) 474-5403 phone (907) 474-1957 fax email: rfok@uaf.edu

Frank Hill, Co-Director

Alaska Federation of Natives 1577 C Street, Suite 300 Anchorage, AK 99501 (907) 274-3611 phone (907) 276-7989 fax email: fnfwh@uaf.edu

Sharing Our Pathways is

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a publication of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, funded by the National Science Foundation Division of Educational Systemic Reformin agreement with the Alaska Federation of Natives and the University of Alaska. We welcome your comments and suggestions and encourage you to submit them to:

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network University of Alaska Fairbanks P.O. Box 756730 Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-6730

(907) 474-5086 phone (907) 474-5615 fax http://www.ankn.uaf.edu email: fyankn@uaf.edu

Newsletter Editor: Dixie Masak Dayo

dixie.dayo@uaf.edu

Layout & Design: Paula Elmes

paula.elmes@uaf.edu

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even my own parents. Our Elders encouraged us to learn as much as we could and to speak English. I was a good learner, always interested about the outside world, as much as any of my peers. The teachers were always promising us great things if we finished school. The Elders wanted us to get an education and get back something that was taken away from us, not to mention the pain and shame they went through for speaking a Native language. They were only trying to protect us from what they went through. It wasn't until I had to go out of the village for high school that I realized what my Elders were talking about. How different the outside world became.

It was through my children's eyes when I realized the important ingredients needed for life that I had left off in my rush to fit into this world.

I was happy to finally finish school, and then I got married and had kids. I was proudest when our kids were born because I was back in the village and learning once again from my Elders and women in the village about the rules on being a mother and raising a child in the Sugpiaq ways. It was through my children's eyes when I realized the important ingredients needed for life that I had left off in my rush to fit into this world. We moved to Anchorage for a few years when the kids were small. As I attended their parent/teacher conferences, the teachers would always end the meetings telling me how much the kids talked and wrote about the village. That sounded to me like their hearts belonged in the village, so we moved back. When I got the school bilingual instructor job I felt so lucky! What an important job. I didn't know what I

was doing but I really took my job seriously. It was only then that I really realized how much of the language was dead and dying in my home and in the Alutiiq-Sugpiaq region. I had always thought our language would be alive and well in Nanwalek, but it seemed in a blink of an eye that only the Elders and a few young adults were speaking the language. This void, this emptiness had come silently, subtly. How did I, a speaker of the language, let this happen?

Where did the Elders and I fit in our community and school to pass on our God-given knowledge of culture and language? I tried my best to teach with no real support from anywhere until I finally met Sandra Holmes, to whom I am forever grateful. She literally opened my eyes and ears. She critiqued my classes and helped me understand how I need to teach in order to be effective. She moved and after that I had no real support from the school district. Over the years I came to realize that forty-five minutes a day, five days a week was hardly making a dent in saving our language. At the bilingual conferences I'd hear the bilingual representative from our district talk with the Russians about their school and they sounded like they were really doing good and moving along. Our program was so sad that I started dreaming of an immersion school. With the help and inspiration of individuals from other Native language immersion schools—Dr. Jeff Leer, our main linguist from UAF Alaska Native Language Center; Dr. Roy Itzu-Mitchel; Loddie Jones from Ayaprun Immersion School in Bethel; my husband Marlon and so many others (some of you may be even here today)—we were finally able to see our dream come true.

We started our immersion school for our pre-school kids three years ago. Our Nanwalek Village Council sponsored us. With the support of parents and grandparents who could see the erosion of our language and culture and the rate we were losing our Elders, and with financial support from various agencies, we got started. Getting started was both an exciting and frustrating time for us. We just converted everything in the head start preschool curriculum into Sugt'stun. We used traditional songs and made up songs and borrowed from our Yup'ik friends. We wanted to work with our district school but they wouldn't even acknowledge us as a school. I remember when I used to teach as a bilingual teacher my credentials were never questioned—supposedly I knew enough to run the

program and have complete responsibility. But when I suggested an immersion program, all of a sudden I knew nothing! They tried to

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discourage us saying that our kids would get confused in school if we did not teach in English. I did some worrying because my own daughter, Ivana, was one of our first students but the thing that kept me going was "Hey, English is all around us through TV and music and even our own people so it will always be there." I can tell you, Ivana is in the first grade and she is doing just fine and so are the rest of our first immersion graduates. We have the happiest times in our little school when our kids are responding to us or to each other in our language or when parents proudly let us know what they hear or what their kids are bringing home. Nothing in the world can beat that!

In the mornings we do regular school work, songs and arts and crafts. Then we have lunch followed by some physical education and some total physical response (TPR) and everything is done in Sugt'stun all day. Our cook, Angun Seville, prepares as much

fresh and healthy Native foods as he can. We have a long way to go, but as I look back, I am proud and grateful for our little school, for our Elders who share their knowledge so freely, for the parents who give us their little ones to pass on our language, and as our Yup'ik sister Loddie says, to pass on our inherited gift from our ancestors.

When I hear of other villages struggling to keep their language alive, I say, "work harder; this is our opportunity and maybe our only chance." Our wildest dream is to teach a Sugt'stun immersion program from preschool to high school in the school

that BIA gave us. We want to be a part of the healing that needs to take place for our lost culture and language. Are we, the Elders in our vil-

lage, really the people our young kids look up to? We want to be. We should be.

We, like any other village or community, want our children to be successful students and young adults. As our Elders say, "Agun'lu Kinautacin—don't forget who you are." We are doing it the best way we know works. I know that when my grandfather said about our language, culture and traditions, "I hope this will go on forever," he meant well. On behalf of all Alaska Native languages that are struggling to survive I urge, "Please don't leave our language behind."

Continued by Sperry Ash:

Momjust told you her experiences. I would like to discuss some other aspects of our language situation so I want to begin by saying we Sugpiaq/Alutiiq people, especially in the Kenai Peninsula, are minorities in our Native land. I think that is also the case for other Sugpiags in their regions—

Prince William Sound, Kodiak and the Alaska Peninsula. Because of our minority status the use of our language suffers, especially within our educational systems:

- We receive no meaningful Native language support from our school districts.
- ➤ We are not allowed to have an immersion program for K-12 students, even though immersion programs do exist in our very own district for the Russian language.
- Our immersion school is not recognized by our school district.
- Not once has there been a Sugpiaq representative on any of the various school boards formed to determine education policies for our village.

All of these decisions are made for us Sugpiags by others. Someone somewhere tells us what's good for us. As many of you are familiar, the history of American education with regard to cultural and language learning, especially in Alaska, is not one to be proud of. The educational flavor of the month is "Leave no child behind." Forgive my negative view, but as far as we can tell this is a new name for doing the same thing they were doing before. All it amounts to is teaching kids to pass some tests. Personally, I think a more appropriate name would be "One size fits all." Whether you agree or not, I can tell you it has not worked well in our village.

The truth is we have only two graduates from Nanwalek. That's a pretty bad record. Even though we, in our village, pay the price for this miserable record, we lack the control to try things our way. Everything about the borough school in our village permeates with the attitude "we know what's best for your kids." Immersion is the unmentionable "I" word. This situation makes it very hard to make any progress when it comes to revitalizing our language.

(continued from previous page)

Besides our language we want to teach our kids to be proud of their culture, who they are, to be risk-takers and to have that can-do attitude they will need to solve the problems that they will face later on in life. The reality though is us kids will be just like our parents. We need to see our parents in charge instead of being helpers, having fun speaking their language instead of ashamed to

From Sally & Sperry Ash:

We really want to thank the organizers of this bilingual conference for inviting us to speak. We enjoyed the experience and the warm support we received. One of the things we do regret is that we did not adequately thank the many people and organizations that have helped us get to this point. Some of you that we would like to thank are:

- Guilia Oliverio, UAF Alaska Native Language Center
- Dr. Jeff Leer, UAF Alaska Native Language Center
- Jennifer Harris, Chugachmuit
 Sherrie Buretta, Chairman
- Sherrie Buretta, Chairman, Chugach Alaska Corporation
- Teri Schneider, Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
- Staff of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Immersion School in Bethel
- All the parents who sent their kids to our school and Nanwalek IRA Tribal members who supported us
- Our corporate donors: Chugach Alaska Corporation, CIRI, English Bay Corp, Rasmusen, DCRA, North Pacific Rim Housing Authority
- Many of the staff and management from Chugach Alaska Corporation, Chugachmuit and the Nanwalek IRA Council.

We also know that there are probably a few people and organizations who we forgot to mention. Please forgive our omission. There are also many of you out there who may not have time or money but support us in spirit. We thank you all for your support.

say it in front of the principal, doing something proactive instead of crying or being consumed by anger about the situation and sharing our culture instead of being only observers and consumers of another culture. The struggle we continue to fight against alcoholism and other social diseases is in part a result of not being in control of our lives. These are the things we

Besides our language we want to teach our kids to be proud of their culture, who they are, to be risk-takers and to have that cando attitude they will need to solve the problems that they will face later on in life.

aim to promote in our school and none of them are on a test.

I have heard it said "Your culture is so important . . . don't lose it," but when you try to actually do something then they say "first get your college degree and then we'll talk about it." For example, I took a lot of math in college. I was able to solve quadratic equations long enough to solve a few on a test. But you didn't invite me here to do that. Nobody does and probably never will. All you want to know and many like you is about our language and culture—all of which I could have learned from people who never went to college, maybe not high school or even grade school.

My mom never went to college. It is an honor to sit beside her and talk to you about our situation. She, like so many of the parents and elderly in the Sugpiaq region, went through the period as a child when speaking Sugt'stun/Alutiit'stun was shunned, shameful or even forbidden. As children they swallowed this guilt. They held on to it. They also raised their children with it. I see it in the common

mannerisms and attitudes towards our Sugpiaq language by this generation. Some still hold on to this. But my mom and a few others finally came to realize that it's okay to be Sugpiaq, Aleut, Alutiiq. It's okay to talk Sugt'stun, Alutiit'stun. Speaking Sugt'stun is not equated with being dumb or slow. Heck, they have two languages in their brains and we only have one. Who's using their brain more?

I don't want to leave you with the impression that it has been a one- or two-person show. Many, many people have contributed to the effort of passing on the Sugt'stun language. There are many proactive community members in the village that share the high hopes for Sugt'stun. Just as we have support in the village, we also have support outside of the village. These connections have been equally as vital to the continuation of our efforts. Mom has mentioned a few so I will not run through the names again but I just want to reemphasize that the support we get is truly helpful. Cali, quyana! Unfortunately, we also have people in our small village of 250 and some outside the village who do not see value in teaching our language to future generations and that has been an additional burden to our efforts. Maybe I shouldn't have talked like this; those that are in disagreement with us might not understand what they are doing. Maybe we ourselves don't know what we are doing either. As my departed grandmother taught us many things about prayer, I ask you, the audience, to please pray for all of us. Pray for us and our efforts, that they are pleasing and acceptable

There are many more issues that need to be addressed related to language and its continuation, but of course we could not discuss them all in this time. I look forward to hearing from the rest of you and especially what you have to teach and share with us. *Quyana*.

ANKN Curriculum Corner

by Ray Barnhardt

The "ANKN Curriculum Corner" highlights curriculum resources available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network that are compatible with the educational tenets outlined in the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*. The focus for this column is on ethno-ornithology, or the study of local bird traditions as a means of enriching and giving significance to the curriculum.

Every community in Alaska contains a wealth of local knowledge about birds that can serve as a rich resource for curriculum ideas and the involvement of local people. In an effort to provide an example of the curricular possibilities in the study of bird traditions, the ANKN is in the final stages of publishing Bird Traditions of the Lime Village Area Dena'ina: Upper Stony River Ethno-Ornithology, by Priscilla N. Russell and George C. West. To illustrate the many enrichment opportunities that the single theme of "birds" can bring to a curriculum, here is the table of contents from this book:

Alaska RSI Regional Contacts

Regional Coordinators:

Andy Hope, Southeast Teri Schneider, Olga Pestrikoff, Moses Dirks, Alutiiq/Unangax̂ John Angaiak, Yup'ik/Cup'ik Katie Bourdon, Iñupiaq Region Athabascan Region pending at TCC

Lead Teachers:

Angela Lunda, Southeast
Teri Schneider/Olga Pestrikoff/
Moses Dirks, Alutiiq/Unangax̂
Esther Ilutsik, Yup'ik/Cup'ik
Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle,
Iñupiaq
Linda Green—Interior/Athabascan

Contents (partial):

Environment
Environmental Communities
Climate and Weather

Seasonal Cycle

Social Interaction Learning about Birds Sharing the Catch

Harvesting Strategies
The Harvesting of Birds
The Harvesting of Eggs
Composition of Hunting Parties
Transportation
Blinds
Hunting Clothes
Methods of Calling Birds

Foods & Products Made from Birds
Preparing and Preserving Birds
for Food
Use of Bird Skin in Clothing and
Other Products
Feather Technology
Bird Bone Technology
Medicinal Uses of Birds

Taming & Training Birds
How Tame Geese Saved the Lives
of a Woman and Her Two
Daughters

Beliefs About Birds

Communication with Birds

Classification and illustration of over 150 bird species

Lime Village student stories Dena'ina language bird list



Teachers in all grade levels and subject areas will find ways to incorporate birds as a theme in their classes, though the kinds of birds available will vary with location and season. For further examples of student work around the topic of birds, check out the stories from Scammon Bay and Marshall on the ANKN web site at http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/Marshall/ birds. The Dena'ina bird traditions publication is also being prepared for posting on the ANKN web site as a model and template for similar curricular resources to be developed by teachers and students in other regions of Alaska. We urge you to check out these resources and get your students involved in the excitement of learning from and documenting the world around them.

We welcome submissions of curriculum resources and ideas that you think might be of interest to others, as well as descriptions of curriculum initiatives that are currently underway or for which you are seeking sites or teachers who are willing to pilot-test new materials. Information on obtaining copies of the materials described in this column is available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network at www.ankn.uaf.edu, fndmd1@uaf.edu or at 907-474-5086.

2003 Celebration Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature

by Virginia Ned

The 2003 Celebration Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature took place on February 2, 2003 at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. The Alaska Indigenous Literature awards were presented at this ceremony. The celebration was sponsored by the Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature working committee with support from Alaska Federation of Natives, Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, Alaska Native Knowledge Network and the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. The awards program and poster were designed and produced by Paula Elmes. The award plaques were designed and

produced by Ben Snowball. The HAIL working committee members are Lolly Carpluk, Virginia Ned, Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle, Bernice Tetpon, Esther Ilutsik, Cecilia Martz, Marie Olson, Andy Hope, Frank Hill, Dorothy Larson, Nita Rearden, Ray Barnhardt, John Angaiak, Martha Stackhouse, Linda Green, Shirley Tuzroyluke, Teri Schneider, Moses Dirks and Olga Pestrikoff.

2003 Alaska Indigenous Literature Award Recipients

Howard Luke for *My Own Trail*, 1998, ANKN. Athabascan Elder Howard Luke's book was written so that Howard could share and preserve his life story and the Athabascan culture with others.

Catherine Attla for Sitsiy Yugh Noholnik Ts'in'. As My Grandfather Told It: Traditional stories from the Koyukuk, 1983; K'etetaalkkaanee. The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals. The Story of an Ancient Traveler, 1990; and Bekk'aatugh Ts'uhuney. Stories We Live By. Traditional Koyukon Athabaskan Stories, 1996, Yukon-Koyukuk School District/Alaska Native Language Center.

Florence Pestrikoff, Mary Haakanson, Sophie Katelnikoff, Jenny Zeeder, Nick Alokli for *Alutiiq Word of the Week*, 1999, Alutiiq Museum. *Alutiiq Word of the Week* has increased exposure of the Alutiiq language and offered valuable cultural knowledge



HAIL award recipients John Active, Alice Petrivelli for Cedar Snigaroff, Howard Luke, Gerald Tennyson for Sophie Shields, Ursula Clauch for Martha Teeluk, Catherine Attla, Edna Lamebull for Katherine Mills and Marie Olson, HAIL Elder.

and stories. More information can be found on www.alutiiqmuseum.com/wordoftheweek.htm or call 907-486-7004.

Aangaarraaq Sophie Shields for her contributions in editing, transcribing and translating materials that are produced for the Yup'ik speakers. Her most recent work is the soon-to-be released *Qulirat* in collaboration with Yup'ik Elder author Paul John and Anthropologist Ann Riordan-Fienup.

Dr. Dolly Garza for *Tlingit Moon* and *Tide Teaching Resource: Elementary Level*, 1999, University of Alaska Fairbanks/Sea Grant College Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks. The book is an excellent educational resource for elementary educators.

John Aqumggaciq Active for his contribution in educating the general public about the Yup'ik culture and his skill at portraying Yup'ik humor which is a vital part of the Yup'ik people. He is well known for his commentaries and reporting of news on KYUK, Alaska Public Radio Network and National Public Radio.

Posthumous Awards:

Cedar Snigaroff for Niigugis Maqaxtazaqangis Atkan Historic Traditions, 1979, Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks. This posthumous award goes to a man who had passed on the Unangax history through his own language.

William Oquilluk for *People of Kauwerak*, 1973, 1981, Alaska Methodist University, Anchorage, Alaska. The book is a memorial to William Oquilluk, to one man's dedication to his personal ideals in response to the obligations imposed on him by his cultural heritage.

Katherine Mills for *Tlingit Thinking*, 1990, Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corporation; *Woosh Yax Yaa Datuwch, Tlingit Math Book*, written by the students of Hoonah High School under the direction of Katherine Mills, 1973, printed by Andy Hope, second edition 1997, ANKN. Katherine was one of the first Tlingit teachers in the University of Alaska Southeast.

Martha C. Teeluk for Martha Teeluk-aam Qulirat Avullri Erinairissuutekun Ukunek Yugnek Evon Benedict, Charlie Hootch, Anna Lee, Matilda Oscar, Isaac Tuntusuk-llu, 2001; and Martha Teeluk-aam Qulirat Avullri Erinairissuutekun Agnes Hootch-aamek, 2001, Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Lower Kuskokwim School District, Bethel, Alaska. Martha was the first Yup'ik woman to be known as an expert in the Yup'ik language who contributed many hours of work developing and creating accurate and practical Yup'ik orthography.

Previous issues of Sharing Our Pathways can be downloaded from our ANKN website:

www.ankn.uaf.edu/SOP

Southeast Region: Tlingit Elders Traditional Education Checklist

Originally published in Beginning Tlingit, Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 1984

The following list was compiled by Richard and Nora Dauenhauer, based on the input and review of many Elders. The Southeast Alaska Tribal College Elders Council formally adopted this checklist in October 2001.

SEATC Elders Council Members

Aronold Booth, Metlakatla
Isabella Brady, Sitka
Nora Dauenhauer, Douglas
Dennis Demmert, Sitka
Lydia George, Angoon
Joe Hotch, Haines
Charles Natkong, Sr., Hydaburg
Marie Olson, Auke Bay
Gil Truitt, Sitka
Jim Walton, Juneau

Part One

What are the most important things in Tlingit tradition that a person needs to know to be well educated in the tradition?

1. Self

Who am I?

Tlingit name Moiety (Eagle or Raven) Clan

Father's clan Grandparents' clans

Names of my major clan crests

Names of my immediate family House group

House groups of my ancestors

2. Relating to Others

Who are you?

Protocol and diplomacy Clan system

Concept of clan ownership;

at.óow Names of *i*

Names of other clans Names of other people

Crests of other clans History of all crests

Extended family & community

Memorials (forty-day parties; memorial fests, potlatch) ANB protocol; Robert's Rules of Order

3. Language

How do we talk?

Both Tlingit and English Careful speech

Oratory (public speaking in traditional and contemporary settings; metaphor and

simile)

4. Literature and History

What do we talk about?

Songs (different types of songs)

Stories (Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature)

Clan histories, legends, migrations, development

5. Dancing (different types of dances)

6. Special Art Forms

(Both technical skills and concept of *at.óow*)
Beading
Sewing

Skin sewing

Weaving Basketry Carving Silver carving

7. Survival: Use of the natural environment

How do we live?

Gathering Native food Putting up food (canning, jarring, freezing)

(continued from previous page)

7. Survival, cont.:

Smoking fish and meat Various calendars (when the fish and game run) Traditional medicine; folk medicine

8. Survival skills

Boating safety Firearms safety Emergency survival on land and water

Traditional and contemporary first aid

Weather observation

9. Fishing (technical skills)

10. Hunting (technical skills)

11. Traditional technology

Boatmaking

Taking care of a boat

Drum making

Carpentry

Cooking

Halibut and salmon hook

making

Fish traps

12. Geography

Place names in Tlingit and English

Chart and map reading

Navigation

Clan lands

Traditional land use

Migration routes

13. Traditional spirituality

Relationship to the natural world (land plants, animals, fish)

Relationship to the spiritual

How to speak to the natural and spiritual worlds

Concept of at.óow

Spiritual dimensions of visual art, songs, dances

Stories and public speaking

How to keep clean in body and spirit

What to do before hunting or fishing

How to treat the kill or catch Fasting for spiritual power Respect for self and others

14. Traditional Taboos

Don't be arrogant Don't brag Don't talk too much Don't speak badly about anything

Don't insult your fellow beings Don't keep all of your first

catch or kill Don't be greedy

15. Manners

Discuss with Elders what good manners were and are for Tlingit culture. It is also interesting to notice where and how Tlingit manners and European manners may be in conflict with each other. For example, is it polite to burp? When do you say "thank you" at the dinner table?

Part Two

Where can a person learn these things?

- 1. From parents and grandparents
- 2. From relatives (uncles, aunts, family)
- 3. From other community members and Elders
- 4. From materials and resources gathered and prepared by others:

Sealaska Heritage Foundation Alaska Native Language

Center

Alaska Native Knowledge Network

Tlingit Readers

5. School programs

Notes

- 1. This draft reflects all feedback and input received from Tlingit Elders to date.
- 2. Don't despair. It is difficult or impossible to know everything on this list. Probably no single Elder knew all of it. Also, keep in mind that this was the survival for the ancestors of the younger Native people of Southeast Alaska, whereas economic survival for most today relies mainly on job skills. Many people today "get up before the Raven" to get kids off to school and get off to jobs.



by Frank Hill

The Alaska Federation of Natives board of directors recently approved the theme for the October 19-25, 2003 annual convention: Education and Self-Determination. As the major advocacy group for Alaska Native people, AFN recognizes that the education of Alaska Natives is essential to their self determination. AFN is well aware of the continuing poor academic performance of most Alaska Native students and their subsequent lack of success in higher education pursuits and in the workplace.

The 2003 AFN Convention will examine the issues around education and self determination for Alaska Natives. Keynote speakers, panels and presentations will be scheduled that highlight the central issues concerning education and connections to personal and Native community self-determination. The AFN Elders and Youth Convention that precedes the regular AFN Convention will also be utilizing the theme of education and self determination, from the Elders and youth perspective.

AFN is working with the First Alaskans Institute to coordinate the major recommendations coming out of the AFN Convention with the focus of the First Alaskans Institute annual Native Education Summit now being planned for mid-November, 2003. AFN is developing a group of Native Educators and representatives of education entities to assist in planning and developing the convention activities including keynote speakers and panels that will highlight the major issues concerning education and self determination.

Iñupiaq Region: NANA Science Fair

by D'Anne Hamilton, Parent and Public Relations Coordinator, Northwest Arctic Borough School District

Northwest Arctic Recognizes Traditional Knowledge in Regional Science Fair

The annual American Indian Science and Engineering Society's Science Fair encourages Native students across the country to become scientists and engineers; the Northwest Arctic Borough School District regional AISES Science Fair on March 7, 2003 reflected the unique life experience of students in the arctic.

"We usually talk with the Elders

have the specific information we

is just gone now."

about this kind of knowledge. But

the ones who are left didn't always

needed, so some of that information

At June Nelson Elementary School in Kotzebue, students from outlying villages sat waiting quietly as judges moved from display to display, questioning the students about their hypotheses, research and conclusions on projects ranging from traditional Iñupiaq diapers to healing practices of tribal doctors in the region. The handful of students spoke confidently

as they greeted visitors to their demonstration boards, explaining the specifics of their projects.

If affinity is what helps light a fire in the hearts of these

fledgling scientists, Kathleen Skin of Selawik should go on to do great things. The Iñupiaq/Mescalero Apache traced the onset of diabetes through her ancestors, beginning with first contact with Europeans on down to her own mother who suffers from diabetes. Skin said she feared for her own health, "Doing this project . . . I started eating healthier and exercising more." Skin demonstrates the traditional measurement of how many vegetables to eat, cupping both hands together. She then makes a fist to show how many carbohydrates to eat,

and so on.

Drawing on the traditional knowledge of the Elders is one of the criteria for judging the projects. One student who descended from a line of tribal doctors detailed the manipulation of the digestive system and its benefits, while another displayed the various types of moss that were used for insulation, fire and baby diapers. Lexy

Staheli of Kiana saidit wasn't easy researching projects like the diapers. With tears in her eyes, Staheli said "We usually talk with the Elders about this kind of

knowledge. But the ones who are left didn't always have the specific information we needed, so some of that information is just gone now."

The grand prize winner was Ely Cyrus of Kiana, whose display included a PowerPoint presentation of a local Elder on video who detailed traditional weather forecasting. Cyrus has won national awards for the project, which included a comparison of the accuracy of traditional versus contemporary forecasting.

The Northwest Arctic Borough School District's bilingual/bicultural coordinator, Ruth Sampson, organized the science fair and has been involved with the AISES event for many years. Although the entries this year were not as numerous as in previous years,



NWABSD AISES science fair coordinator Ruth Sampson (left) presents students with awards for their projects.

with less than a dozen entries, Sampson believes the program has made a difference in encouraging Native youth to pursue science careers. "It really opens their eyes to the world around them and helps them to see the value in the knowledge the Elders have . . . and a side benefit has been the preservation of some important traditional knowledge that might not have been documented."

Students who win their regional science fairs are eligible to go on to state competition, which in Alaska is called the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Society Science Fair. Top winners in that event are eligible for the National AISES Science Fair, which is usually held in the spring.

For more information about AISES science fairs go to www.aises.org and for the ANSES Science Fair go to www.ankn.uaf.edu/anses/Overallstateinfo.html.

Iñupiaq Region: Keviq in Stebbins

by Katie Bourdon

The Keviq or Messenger Celebration is a traditional custom of the Yupik people that embraces a rites of passage for young people to perform their "first dance" to the community. It's a passage that teaches and emanates generosity, humbleness, respect, patience, humor and belonging. Each "first dancer" stands in the center beautifully dressed from head to toe—decorated headdress, beaded necklaces, new kuspuk, mukluks, dancing fans or ornamented gloves. Family members begin the "give-away" of furs, hand-knitted gloves and socks, scarves, blankets, tools, fabric, candy and on and on. Special items are draped over the arms of first dancers for designated Elders.

Once the giveaway is completed, the song leader begins by singing solo the family's selected song. The band of drummers join in once it's sung

pumyua or "tale again" and dancers are obligated respectfully to dance the tale again. It's common for dancers to continue the same dance 10, 15

times or more to the pleasure of the crowd. It's beautiful to watch—as the dancers tire, their intensity does not and with this intensity, the dancers and drummers become one. The palpable drummers' beat rings out and the dancers glisten with sweat. The flow of the strong beat and the rhythmic

dancers motion all in unison engages everyone who watches.

Sixteen new dancers performed their "first dance" on Friday,

February 21 to the honored guests who traveled from Kotlik and to their fellow community members in Stebbins. Dancing and giving away graced the community well into the next day and didn't stop until 3:00 AM on Saturday.



In the center April Marie Merlin, who is 4 years old, is performing her "first dance" with her great-grandmother, Christine Steve, on the left and her adoptive mother, Margaret Merlin, on the right. Pumyua!

Later in the afternoon on Saturday there was another giveaway from the community of Stebbins to the Elders of Kotlik of gathered Native foods that were harvested by Stebbins people. In the evening, communities gathered again for dancing. Now the new dancers are no longer first dancers and could join any dance. The dances that were performed on Saturday evening were requested by the Elders from Kotlik. Following the Stebbins dancers, Kotlik was invited to perform. Elders Joe and Martina Apazeruk, who are in their 80s, gave a performance with grace, dignity, love, respect and humor that blessed all who witnessed. We could have watched those two all night! Dancing by Kotlik was enjoyed by everyone until midnight on Saturday.

The Keviq was a weekend of nurturing between two communities that cultivates and strengthens all through cultural traditions that have thrived for generations and are still going strong in Stebbins. *PUMYUA!*



Elder Rose Anne Waghiyi dancing. Rose Anne has been an instrumental Elder in Stebbins in reviving the Kevig and traditional dancing.

through by the leader and the awaited performance of the first dancer begins. Yupik style of dance is one of repeated encores. Guests can request

Yup'ik Region: Nurturing New Teachers into the Y/Cup'ik Culture

by Esther Ilutsik

Throughout pregnancy, an expectant mother is in tune with the new child's development and takes care in nurturing it in the womb by abiding with the cultural and ritual practices of her society. These practices and rituals are learned during the actual development of the child, thus providing understandings that will be retained by the mother-to-be for as long as she lives.

A similar learning model is being used with the new teacher orientation sessions that are being implemented throughout the Yup'ik region. With the guidance and blessings of our experienced Native educators we have begun a new (but actually old) method of providing a cultural orientation base for all the new certified teachers coming into the Y/Cup'ik-serving districts. Specifically, we are using the Yaaveskaniryaraq Cultural Education Model developed by Cecilia Martz and Lucy Sparck, originally of Chevak and presently residing in Bethel.

The Ciulistet Research Association in cooperation with the Southwest Region School District has received a small grant from Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, Division of Teaching and Learning Support, to train four facilitators who will develop a nine-month, site-based cross-cultural orientation program for the 2003–2004 school year. The first

training session will begin with consultant Cecilia Martz introducing the participants to the Yup'ik philosophy statement titled, *C/Yuuyaraq* that was developed by a group of C/Yup'ik Elders and teachers. This will be followed with a series of intensive training sessions and will feature one pilot site where the facilitator will actually interact with certified teachers and Elder consultants. Each facilitator will be responsible for creating their own site-based model for implementation for the coming year. The site facilitators are Esther Stauffer who is the federal programs coordinator with the Dillingham City Schools, Margie Hasting who teaches in New Stuyahok, Christine Andrews who is the bilingual specialist for the Southwest Region Schools and will be the facilitator for the village of Manokotak and Evelyn Yanez who is a retired teacher out in Togiak.

Another model is emerging in the

Congratulations to two more emerging Native educator associations! The **Yupiit School District** has established an interim board: Sophie Kasayulie, Annie Kinegak, Maggie Williams, Mary Alexie, Katie George and Alberta Dementle. They are tentatively scheduled to meet on April 8, 2003 to establish bylaws for their association. The **Kashunamuit School District** has also established an interim board: John Pingayak, Phillip Tulim, Dottie Chayalkun, Lisa Unin, Rebecca Kelly, Teresa Ulroan and James Anyuluk. They convened a meeting on March 25, 2003 to establish bylaws for their association. Welcome and we all look forward to working with you.

Lower Kuskokwim and Yupiit School Districts in cooperation with the Association of Village Council Presidents where the facilitators are trained as a team. Nita Rearden, Education Specialist/Academics; Walter Tirchick, Yup'ik Translator and Fannie Andrew, Itinerant Literacy (all with the Lower Kuskokwim School District) and Mary Alexie and Maggie Williams, both teachers with the Yupiit School District, are participating in a series of intensive workshops where Cecilia Martz guides them through in-depth learning of Yup'ik knowledge-based activities. These activities are processed, internalized and then presented at the scheduled orientation sessions for the new teachers within the respective school districts. LKSD is doing it as a semester pilot test now. After taking a class in Y/Cup'ik from Cecilia, the three facilitators are translating the lectures. Presentations of cultural orientation includes lectures, reading materials, oral storytelling and application of lectures through handson cultural activities planned by facilitators. Teachers who are taking the class are requested to do their sitebased research using Elders as their primary source for their written assignments. Our class also includes videos with Elders and discussions. We are using the guidelines developed in February for Cultural Orientation for New Teachers.

The two cultural orientation models that are being developed will be tested this next school year and we are anxious to see the birth of the "infants" who will have been provided much positive culturally-based nurturing.

Yup'ik Region: Russian Mission Junior High Goes to Japan

This article first appeared in the Lower Yukon School District newsletter, third edition

ine junior high students from Russian Mission spent one week in Japan this past February. The purpose of the trip was to give a presentation at a symposium on the environment sponsored by World School Net. Through this internet organization the students have shared information about their lifestyle with students from around the world.

At the symposium they presented the story of their relationship with the natural world and also presented the ecological issues that threaten their



Some of the Nakano students showed us around Tokyo. Then we visited their school. Most of the group checked out the music and sewing classes. Later at the assembly in the gym we showed them our dances and they showed us their sword fighting and drums.

—Margie Larson

At the reception we taught everybody how to dance and they loved it. After the dances I let Suki try on my quspuk and Jamie loaned hers to another girl. We shared rooms with the girls from Japan and from Israel and they were fun to hang out with. We played card games almost all night. By the time we woke up they were already gone and we never got to say goodbye or give them gifts, but they left us a card that said, "best friends forever."

-Charitina Nick

way of life. The presentation was impressive both for the poise with which the students presented themselves and for the insight they gave to an audience unaware that subsistence was still being practiced. Then they danced and the serious tone of the conference turned to one of celebration. They brought this celebration to other schools and communities in Japan. Everywhere they were greeted with excitement and interest because of who they are.



This is Natumi, Karin and Tomoka with our head-dresses. Karin couldn't stop laughing when she put on my quspuk. We visited their school and we also spent a day with them in the wet, white snow. When I left Japan I felt like crying because I didn't want to leave those girls. —Charitina Nick



The Elders came over to the community center to teach us how to make rope from rice straw. At first we were confused, but then we caught on. We had to roll the grass and make rope long enough to use to make sandals. We had to hold the grass with our feet. All the Russian Mission kids made sandals. It was really special to work with the Japanese Elders. —Kenny Vaska



Everyone liked the food we ate in Japan. The Japanese people let Russian Mission students try all their different foods. It was our first time eating many of their foods. The students did not know how to use chopsticks at first, but they learned how to use them in a couple of days. Some Elders from Shiozawa came to the community center and taught us kids how to make rice balls. —Victor Belkoff

Athabascan Region: Whouy Sze Kiunalth: Teaching Our Many Grandchildren

by Joan Herrmann

histochina and Mentasta are two small tribal communities in Southcentral Alaska. Although connected by the Alaska Highway system, both villages are remote and nearly invisible in the region—invisible, however, only to the casual passerby. Both communities have very active tribal councils as governing bodies. Both communities are also served by Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium (MSTC) which provides for a range of services including health and education. This is the place where we are changing our world one student at a time.

Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium received grants that are helping to create a better world for our people. In a partnership with two museums, two school districts, University of Alaska and the National Parks Service, our students are learning about our traditional way of life, how to make healthy lifestyle choices, why we should care for our land and how to use technology. In short, we are teaching our children how to maintain their cultural identity and also succeed in a modern world.

Providing quality health care in rural Alaska presents many challenges to our villages. However, for the past two years, our students have been working to raise community awareness about crucial health issues while learning how to make responsible choices that impact their own health. Our "Learn and Serve America" programs were designed to promote learning and passing on information about our traditional ways of staying healthy, our use and preparation of subsistence foods, our Athabascan language and comparing ways of life today to ways of life for our Elders in the past.

MSTC was awarded three tribal grants by the Corporation for National Service, Learn and Serve America program. These grants promote a *service-learning* approach through all the program activities. This approach, commonly associated with traditional learning styles, encourages our young people to learn and develop through active participation in service experiences that meet actual community needs and are coordinated with the village schools and communities. We have already conducted activities such as removal of more than 300 junk cars and studentled health fairs; activities that extend our children's learning beyond the classroom out into our communities and foster a sense of caring for others, leadership skills, career-related skills and preservation of traditional knowledge that will protect the health of our communities for present and future generations.

In our villages, the Elders are the only ones left with full knowledge of the old ways and as they leave us, so does our culture. Many of our older people were sent away to boarding school when they were young, de-



Angie David assists as her Grandma Katie John goes through the screenings at last spring's health fairs.

nied the right to speak our language in school and were inundated with the outside world's way of doing and living. Today's children are even further removed from our traditions and culture, but they have an easier time learning and an energy that makes it fun to teach them. By having the Elders teach the students, the knowledge is being passed on directly to the generation that will know enough by adulthood to do more with it. The student's parents will also benefit from what their children learn, as the students share what they have learned with their village.

Partnerships

Tribal councils and focus groups provide the source of guidance and direction for the projects; Cheesh'na Tribal Council and Mentasta Lake Traditional Council offer input and direction to the entire program and many of the same people serve as focus group members. The purpose of the focus groups is to bring together a diverse group of local community members for input on project

(continued from previous page)

processes and progress. They have been working with program staff and students for five years providing curriculum content, direction for student research and guidance for the program staff.



Leandra Martin builds a diorama at the Denver Museum—learning how to build exhibits.

Student service activities are planned to ensure ongoing quality service activities and learning throughout the entire year, rather than just during the school year. Practical, working partnerships continue to be developed with the village councils, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, our local health clinics and Gateway and Copper River School Districts to provide health education opportunities to our students and community members.

Classroom Activities

Our students participate in class-room research about sanitation and nutrition, and program assistants provide after-school activities two to three times per week that support the class-room lessons. Activities include students examining the content of foods they usually eat, cooking nutritional snacks, interviewing Elders and preparing food for them. Students also make posters for display in the schools and community halls and plan traditional themes for their upcoming health fair exhibits.

Health education presentations and activities are coordinated in our villages utilizing local expertise wherever possible. For example, Mentasta Elder, Katie John has spent time with students discussing her nationally acclaimed lawsuit, Katie John vs. the State of Alaska, and sharing why she has worked so hard for the future of Alaska Native subsistence rights and lifestyle. Elder Lena Charley spends one day each week with students to teach them traditional ways of living and speaking their language. Elder Molly Galbreath has shared with students about what her life was like, growing up in Batzulnetas; sharing photos of tanning moose hides, talking about wilderness survival and staying strong and healthy by living off the land.

Student-led Health Fairs

The projects follow MSTC's Mission "... empowering our people by enhancing our traditional values to ensure a healthier and more positive future for our children." These grants allow the students to participate in fun, hands-on, culturally relevant lessons in and out of school. One of the most important and favorite ways of learning is through our community's Elders who are grandparents of not only their grandchildren but of all the children in the community and share their knowledge with them. The students then take what they've learned, stories and traditional knowledge of health and caring for the environment and create ways to share it with their community.

To share what they've learned, students put on an annual spring health fair, present skits at community dinners, are developing a website, help teach in the computer lab and are restoring a historical trail to be used as an interpretive trail in each village.

The health fair is the most work intensive as students design and produce the exhibits based on traditional knowledge.

The students work hard to learn from their Elders and community members. Students research in teams of four to eight and create learning centers to share pertinent cultural knowledge with their communities. Students present their projects at the spring health fairs where they act as teachers to share their new-found knowledge with their communities.

Our students have been challenged to learn from Elders about important cultural traditions. The past two years, they have explored issues that are important and that they feel are especially relevant to their lives today. The students in Chistochina have focused on subjects including steambath, exercise, nutritional values of moose vs. beef, local berries and traditional medicinal plants. Mentasta students have chosen to focus on the traditional knowledge and practices having to do with the moose during hunting, food preparation, potlatch, language and uses of the hide.

Culturally-Relevant Curriculum

Throughout the project, a culturally-relevant curriculum has been developed and piloted as a working document that breaks down many barriers—to bring the community into the classroom. The curriculum, called Whouy Sze Kiunalth (Teaching our Many Grandchildren), has lessons about topics ranging from subsistence and environmental management to gathering, nutrition and traditions of our food. This curriculum is the product of five years of intensive work and actually began with the original Learn and Serve grant.

Teaching strategies are being developed through our partnerships

with UAF for the curriculum that will promote a better understanding of health and environmental issues in Alaska Native Villages and build necessary skills for rural service. The curriculum has been designed as a model to teach students about their culture, whatever it may be, and is aligned with current Alaska state standards throughout the lessons, making it "teacher friendly". It is designed to be shared, used, adjusted or adapted in order to meet the individual needs of villages and schools who use it. Now in its final editing phase, the curriculum has been formally adopted by both Copper River and Alaska Gateway school districts.





Jerry Charley teaches students how to make a drum.

Exhibit

One of the program goals is to develop an exhibit that will demonstrate our commitment to ensuring a healthier and more positive future for our children. And as we have progressed through these projects, it has become apparent that the exhibit we want to construct will be a model for many Alaska tribes and will be appreciated for its educational value in many arenas around the state such as schools, hospitals, cultural centers, our partner museums and many other locations.

We are working with an exhibit designer to develop a conceptual plan. This design plan will develop ways this can be viewed and translated for clarity by all ages and literacy levels. Modern technologies that are used in high quality museum exhibits will be utilized.

The exhibit, titled after the original project, "Teaching Our Many Grandchildren," is expected to be small, about 300 square feet, and will be designed to travel to a variety of venues including museums and culture centers in Fairbanks, Anchorage and the Copper River region as well as to schools, libraries and other community centers in rural Alaska. It may also travel to the Lower 48 to venues such as our partner museums or other cultural centers.

The exhibit will present the story of our Athabascan clans and how our Elders, Mentasta Traditional Council. Cheesh'na Tribal Council. Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium and school teachers are committed to preserving and passing on the values and knowledge of our traditional tribal identity, that is, our subsistence lifestyle based on a deep respect for the land and each other. It will tell about stories passed on by our Elders such as Katie John who, in a changing world, continues to remind her children and many grandchildren of the old ways of living and the lessons they taught of self-reliance, laughter and service to our villages.

Since the focus of "Teaching Our Many Grandchildren" is to demonstrate subsistence and the values of spiritual well being inherent in our lifestyle; the exhibit will also house objects and artifacts that reflect our subsistence way of life. Key in presenting the story of our people is the land and a strong sense of *place*. The exhibit will show the majesty and great beauty of the Copper River headwater region, beloved home to our people.



Museum staff at UAF guide Brian McLaren, exhibit designer, and Megan Holloway, resource educator, search the archives for exhibit artifacts.

We hope to develop an online version of this exhibit to make it available to rural communities who might not otherwise be able to view it. Several agencies have already expressed a desire to see this project succeed and have indicated an interest in displaying the exhibit after its completion date which we anticipate for fall, 2003.

Closing

Each student has had the opportunity to become an expert on his or her project. They are beginning to understand the depth of knowledge available in their communities and the importance of sharing that knowledge with their peers. They have gained self-esteem and pride, essential elements for living a healthy life.

The "Teaching Our Many Grandchildren" curriculum resources will be available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site at www.ankn.uaf.edu.

Athabascan Region: Interior Athabascan Tribal College Language Program

by Beth Leonard

oordinators with the UAF Alaska Native Language Center Career Ladder Program and the Interior Athabascan Tribal College have been busy planning the 2003 summer sessions. The program offers Athabascan language immersion classes as well as coursework in Athabascan linguistics, literacy and teaching methods/curriculum development. In the past, all students met at the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus. This summer, several language groups will meet within their respective regions.

The Gwich'in Language Development Institute will take place in Fort Yukon from May 27 through June 17; for more information, please contact Kathy Sikorski at 907-474-7875 or Jennifer Carroll, Yukon Flats Center at 907-662-2521.

Irene Solomon-Arnold and Gary Holton are planning the Tanacross/ Upper Tanana (Northway) Language Development Institute which is scheduled to take place in Tok. For more information please contact Irene Solomon-Arnold at 907-474-6263.

The Deg Xinag (Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, Shageluk) Language Development Institute will take place in one of the Lower Yukon villages. For information on this program, please contact Beth Leonard at 907-452-8251, x3287 or Malinda Chase at x3484.

The Koyukon and Lower Tanana (Minto/Nenana) Language Development Institutes will take place on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus from June 2–20. For more information on the Koyukon program, please contact Susan Paskvan at 907-474-0764 and for information on the Lower Tanana program, please contact David Engles in Minto at daveengles@yahoo.com or Beth Leonard at the phone number listed above.

University of Alaska Fairbanks
Alaska Native Knowledge Network/Alaska RSI

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