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Sharing Our Pathways

A newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
Alaska Federation of Natives ◆ University of Alaska ◆ National Science Foundation ◆ Rural School and Community Trust

Cross-Cultural Teacher Orientation at Shaktoolik, Alaska

by Yaayuk Bernadette Alvanna Stimpfle

The Bering Strait School District held their new teacher meeting in Shaktoolik during the weekend of October 3–5, 2003. The new teachers and guest speakers came into Shaktoolik on Friday evening. It was a quiet evening with dinner and relaxation at the school gymnasium. After dinner, the students of Shaktoolik School demonstrated Native games such as the Two Feet and One Foot High Kick, Stick Pull and One Hand Reach.

Saturday was a full day of keynote speeches, an Elders' panel and workshops. Rich Toymil, the local principal, along with various community members welcomed everyone to Shaktoolik. Dr. Ray Barnhardt was introduced as the keynote speaker. He set the tone for the day with an overview of Native education and the

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The Elders' Panel: Clarence & Mary Katchatag, Lucy Savetelik, Dina Sagoonick, Clara Sookiayak and Ernest Sagoonick.

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work of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. When he was finished there was panel of Elders: Clarence Katchatag, Mary Katchatag, Lucy Savetelik, Dina Sagoonick, Clara Sookiayak and Ernest Sagoonick. They related their experiences as students the first time they entered school. They talked about how things are changing so fast now. When they went to school for example, they did not speak English, they spoke only in Inupiaq. Now, the children do not speak Inupiaq, only English. One Elder talked about how when she was in school, she was punished for speaking in Inupiaq. She decided when she had children, she would not let them speak Inupiaq so they would never be punished in school. Now her grown children do not speak the Inupiaq language but her grandchildren are learning in school.

The teacher had opportunities to ask questions throughout the session. One teacher asked, "What would you like us to teach your children? What do you want your children to learn?" An immediate answer was, "We want our children to learn Inupiaq!"

The panel continued with some of the history of the area, the first time they saw airplanes, healthcare aboard the BIA North Star ship and stories from the village members. Ernest Sagoonick told about practicing writing by sending "free letters" to their relatives and friends at the next village. As young children, they would plop themselves under the plane and write a message in the dirt on the fuselage. Sure enough, when the plane returned there would be a message back!

Simon Bekoalok speaking to the new BSSD teachers.

After eating lunch, we held our first workshop sessions. There were three concurrent workshop sessions: Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools with Ray Barnhardt; Integrating Culturally-Responsive School Standards in Education with Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle; and Shaktoolik IRA, City and Native Corporation members shared how the village agencies work and ways to integrate the school into the community.

Of particular interest a second year BSSD teacher, Lynda Lee Proctor at Shaktoolik, shared how she began using a set of Native storybooks from the Kawereak Eskimo Heritage Program. She included the storybooks as part of her SFA (Success for All) reading program and the stu-

Some of the King Island Ugiumangmiut Dancers.

dent interest for reading increased. Linda was part of the new teacher meeting in Nome last school year.

In the evening, there was a big potluck dinner in the gymnasium. The local residents brought in delicious traditional Native and contemporary foods. When everyone was done eating and cleaning up, the much-awaited King Island Ugiumangmiut Dancers performance began. It was the first time in over seventy years that Native dancing had taken place in Shaktoolik, since Western religions had abolished dancing in some Native communities. The people were awed and gave a warm and welcoming response and the young dancers danced even harder the next time. At the end of the performance, the audience gave a standing ovation—a first for the King Island Ugiumangmiut Dancers!

Sunday morning we held our third workshop and by the afternoon the new teachers, speakers and workshop presenters flew back to their homes. The meeting organizers, Rich and Sue Toymil, did a wonderful job of taking care of everyone and making sure things happened when they were supposed to happen. Simon Bekoalok and I helped with workshop presentations.

For me, the dancing was quite an experience. I am part of the King Island Ugiumangmiut Dancers. There were twenty of us all together that performed at Shaktoolik. The youngest dancer was eighteen months old and our Elder was Cecelia Muktoyuk. Our president is nineteen-year-old Asaaluk Irelan. I emceed the dancing and noticed how the audience was so receptive. Our young men wanted to dance more because they felt how much the audience enjoyed watching them!

Overall, the BSSD cultural orientation program for new teachers was a success. It will be followed with more activities for the new teachers as the year goes along.

In the Presence of Stories

by Vivian Martindale

"The storyteller is one whose spirit is indispensable to the people."

—N. Scott Momaday

According to Kiowa author and poet, N. Scott Momaday, the Native person lives "in the presence of stories." He claims the storyteller is many things: magician, artist and creator as well as a holy man. "He is sacred business" (Circle of Stories). Stories are meant to be told. They enrich our lives and for educators they can enrich our classrooms as well.

We are humbled and gracious in the presence of storytellers, yet how do we incorporate that knowledge into education, especially higher education? Most students come to the college classroom expecting the standard lecture and the required readings. Long forgotten is the Socratic method, which promotes listening by the students and gentle facilitating by the instructor. This method is similar to many Native American methods of teaching by example. Elders often engage the observer or learner in what they are doing. For example, if a carver is teaching an apprentice, the Elder often sits and carves while telling a story. To the untrained listener the story may not relate to what the apprentice should be learning, but usually the storyteller/carver gets around to bringing the meaning into what they are doing. Eventually the apprentice, when he is ready, picks up the piece of wood provided for him and begins to carve. Also, in Native cultures it is common to give the child or student the tools to learn and let them experiment with their learning. One example is when a child is learning to fillet fish. He may be given a small fish and a small knife and allowed to slice the fish without instruction because the child has observed the women slicing fish at the fish camp. As well, the child learning to carve will be given a piece of wood and the tools to carve without being instructed by reading a book, or a "lecture." Children are allowed to experience life, they are allowed to just "be."

We are humbled and gracious in the presence of storytellers . . .

These methods, translated to learning in the classroom, allow the student to listen to the stories, read the poems or other literature, and then

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interpret that knowledge without being "wrong" or told how to think. Interpretation and the variations of interpretation of knowledge are viewed according to one's culture, therefore the cultures of individual students must be appreciated.

There are similarities between the Socratic method and the methods of teaching in Native American traditions. The Socrates method of teaching, according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, is divided into two stages: negative and positive:

> In the negative stage Socrates, approaching his intended pupil in an attitude of assumed ignorance, would begin to ask a question, apparently for his own information. He would follow this by other questions, until his interlocutor would at last be obliged to confess ignorance of the subject discussed. Because of the pretended deference, which Socrates played to the superior intelligence of his pupil, this stage of the method was called "Socratic Irony". In the positive stage of the method, once the pupil had acknowledged his ignorance, Socrates would proceed to another series of questions, each of which would bring out some phase or aspect of the subject, so that at the end, when all the answers were summed up in a general statement, that statement expressed the concept of the subject, or the definition. Therefore, knowledge through concepts, or knowledge by definition, is the aim of the Socratic method. *(Catholic Encyclopedia)*

Although I would not categorize the two steps into the terms "negative" and "positive" because all learning can be applied to our lives in a positive way. I would re-word the term "negative" to "exploring". In the exploring stage we examine new concepts and learn new things. Often we make mistakes and are very aware of our ignorance. But this is not "negative" so-to-speak, but learning by doing. The Socratic method can bring out concepts and ideas by the questioning of the instructor and allow for the students to explore what they have learned and what that knowledge means to them. It is not enough just to lecture on how the facts are interpreted in the mainstream society, which is usually with a Euro-American twist, but learning in a multi-cultural environment must allow for the students to see through another's worldview whether they are Native or from another ethnic background.

. . . in Native American cultures many concepts within those cultures can only be taught through the original native languages, which is why it is important to bring those languages into the classroom through stories, songs, dances and other customs.

However, in Native American cultures many concepts within those cultures can only be taught through the original native languages, which is why it is important to bring those languages into the classroom through stories, songs, dances and other customs. The instructor and students can view videos, such as the ones on the "Circle of Stories" website produced by the Public Broadcast System, and use the Socratic method to bring out any ideas or questions that the students may have. "Circle of Stories" is just one such site, among many available on the internet, that promotes listening and interaction by the educator and or student. According to the PBS site, they use documentary film, photography, artwork and music to honor and explore Native American storytelling.

The website is divided into five parts: Storytellers, Many Voices, We Are Here, Community and For Educators. As a learning tool, this site can broaden instructional techniques and allow for an increase in listening skills as well as bringing Native culture into the classroom.

Because literature is not limited to the written form, in many Native American communities such as those in Alaska, oral traditions are considered literature. This makes sense because poetry is considered literature; short stories are considered literature, yet both are best enjoyed when read aloud. Stories and poetry are meant to be read aloud therefore incorporating the storytelling process into the classroom can be a rewarding experience for both students and teachers. Even if a student doesn't particularly enjoy nor want to tell a story, he or she can participate by listening. Because listening is a valuable part of Native American society it should be honored. Part of the benefit of incorporating storytelling into the curriculum is that some students haven't been taught to listen properly or respect the listener as many people in Native American communities have been. Television, internet, video games and many technologies are geared for the "viewer" and not the "listener." A good website such as "Circle of Stories" can be enjoyed by a listener as well as being used as an interactive visual aid.

According to the website:

> In the basket of Native stories, we find legends and history, maps and poems, the teachings of spirit mentors, instructions for ceremony and ritual, observations of worlds and storehouses of ethno-ecological knowledge. Stories often live in many dimensions, with meanings that reach from the everyday to the divine. Stories imbue places with the power to teach, heal and reflect. Stories are possessed with such

power that they have survived for generations despite attempts at repression and assimilation. (Circle of Stories)

In Native American communities songs, dances and music are all considered stories. They tell something. There are consistent themes in the stories. Stories tell us about the culture in which they were created and are an excellent way to learn about a particular culture. Students can listen to a story from a specific period in time, comparing an old story to a modern one, or a hero story to one that is intended to teach a lesson. One can also compare stories that are similar or different from region to region.

Understanding rituals and ceremonies within the context of a culture is another way of learning about a Native community. The Mojave Creation song is just one example, "Some Native songs are sung in great cycles, containing over 100 songs for a specific ritual. The Mojave Creation songs, which describe cremation rituals in detail, are a collection of 525 songs and must be performed for the deceased to journey to the next world." Stories can be symbolic, teach a lesson, teach how to conduct ceremonies, promote understanding of the natural world, how to survive in the environment, oral maps for travel, transformation stories and stories about love and romance. (Circle of Stories)

In "Circle of Stories," the section for educators consists of lessons designed to enable students to examine Native American storytelling, as well as create their own stories. The lessons are also intended to explore indigenous and Native American cultures and the issues within those cultures. Students are encouraged to research and explore their own cultural heritage by recording family stories and heritage. Although these lesson plans are designed for grades 6–12, one could incorporate them into the college curriculum.

The section for educators is divided into three lessons. The first, entitled "It's All Part of the Story," is about instructing students on the rich cultural and religious heritage of the generations before us, and it leads us to understand how our past has influenced our present. Use this plan to help students learn to share their story while learning to appreciate stories from others. The second section titled, "Our Small World" examines the contributions of Native cultures to our modern society as well as how to keep the cultures alive and the role of storytelling in that process. The third lesson, "Record and Preserve Your Family Heritage," is about learning how to record stories and the proper protocols involved with gathering stories. (Circle of Stories)

Featured under the heading "Storytellers" in the main menu, are three or four storytellers and their stories. Included is a biography of the storyteller, something about their culture and then a story told by that person (Real Player is the software used to listen to the downloaded audio.) Also some of the stories are told in the original language of the storyteller. One featured storyteller is Hoskie Benally, a Dinè (Navajo) spiritual leader, from Shiprock, New Mexico. He tells the story of the Five Sacred Medicines, which is the story of how the Navajo acquired their medicines: sage, tobacco, cedar, yucca and eagle feathers.

Another storyteller featured on this site is Tchin from the Narragansett people, who inhabited the area now known as Rhode Island for 30,000 years. Tchin is also part Siksika, more commonly known as the Blackfeet people. Like many Native American cultures, the Narragansett were nearly wiped out by settlers who brought disease and violence. According to Tchin, "In 1880, the state of Rhode Island illegally detribalized the Narragansett, terminating the tribe on paper. The Narragansett lost their remaining 3200 acres of land, leaving them with only a church on a scarce two acres" (Circle of Stories). Eventually with the introduction of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, the government recognized the Narragansett as a distinct people, but fell short of federal recognition and unfortunately they were unable to acquire back their land. But in 1978, tribal members filed a lawsuit, which resulted in the government returning 2000 acres to their possession. Federal recognition eventually came about in 1983. Tchin uses these facts and his knowledge of storytelling to bring the listener into his story of why rabbit looks like he does today.

The stories and information on this site are excellent tools for instruction. Adapting the site to individual instructors need only take a bit of imagination. Whether we are in a grade school, high school or the college classroom, our educational experiences are enhanced by stories. In the presence of stories our knowledge can increase, especially our knowledge of the cultures around us. Many Euro-Americans grow up in regions without knowing the richness of their Native neighbors. Stories are just one way to incorporate knowledge, language and culture within the classroom. In our classrooms as well as our lives, we are enriched by the presence of stories.

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Alutiiq Region: Improvisation—Having Fun Making Do

by Jim Dillard, participant at the 2001 Afognak Academy of Elders/Science Camp.

Watching the Elders make do with the materials and tools at hand was a genuine learning experience for me. I have always been one to use "the proper tool for the job," and as a result, I am sometimes severely limited in what I can accomplish in arts or crafts outside my shop. As the Elders worked on different crafts, they always seemed to have everything they needed to finish the project at hand.

As several of the Elders were building a skiff in camp, I noticed that there were no plans, no blueprints, no sort of device to keep everything to scale. I was to learn that these items, had they been there, would have only hindered the process. All measurement was by the length of parts of the human body, an arm span, a hand span, nose to fingertip and so on. The finished project was beautifully balanced in form and was totally symmetrical—custom made.

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As the boat was actually being constructed, the tools used were minimal. Knowing the importance of braces and clamps in such a project, I doubted that the quality of work would be what it should be without (manufactured) clamps. I watched with some delight as the braces and clamps were made on the spot. Several boards and a small beach log were wedged between trees close to the project. To apply downward pressure, boards were wedged from other boards which were wedged between trees—a bit complicated and maybe even comical to look at, but quite effective. Clamps were made of boards around which was tied scrap line scrounged from the beach. Strong driftwood spruce limbs were used to twist the line tightly around the boards to clamp glue joints perfectly together until dry. In essence, hundreds of dollars worth of tools were replaced by locally available materials and true ingenuity. The best part of watching the entire process was listening to the Elder boat builders as they joked and laughed at the "homely contraptions" they had constructed to do their work.

Several of the men at camp, including myself, decided to make darts for Uksgaaq, the whale dart game. I had brought lead wire of the proper diameter to weight the heads of the darts, but soon discovered that I did not have the proper size drill bit to install the lead wire in the dart heads. I was somewhat surprised one evening to find that several of the Elders were actually finishing their sets of darts. I put down what I was doing and examined a dart made by one of the Elders. The weights in the head were made of the shot from a shotgun shell. The holes were drilled with a pocket knife and the lead shot was held in place by pressure applied to the shot with the side of the pocket knife. When I questioned that particular Elder as to where he learned the lead shot trick, he kindly explained that he had never really learned the method, as a matter of fact, he had never used that particular method before, but said, "That's just what I happened to have."

I discovered that an acceptable tool for a given job may be in my pocket or even on the beach right in front of me. I have begin to experience the special humor-laden pleasure of completing a job by improvisation.

Throughout the rest of the week I frequently saw similar incidences of on-the-spot ingenuity. From my experiences I learned not to limit myself so much to using only the "proper tool." I have learned that common items found in any camp or boat can be used as effective tools. I discovered that an acceptable tool for a given job may be in my pocket or even on the beach right in front of me. I have begin to experience the special humor-laden pleasure of completing a job by improvisation.

Alutiiq Region: Caring for Elders

by Jim Dillard

A memorable event for me at the 2001 Academy of Elders Camp was an evening discussion group with Cecilia Martz, a Cup'ik educator. Although I had a variety of things running through my mind at the time of the discussion, I still remember (without notes) the majority of the material in that discussion. One of the main points of focus in this discussion was a set of rules that Cecilia was taught as a child to follow. These were the rules regarding the care and treatment of Elders in the community. In my own village experience I had participated in sharing with Elders in the community, but after this discussion, I now realize that a fairly strict set of guidelines could have made that sharing much more meaningful for both the Elders and myself.

I remember often coming home with a tub full of king crab. I would always have my children climb in the back of the truck. We would drive around to the Elders' homes, honk and hold up a crab or two. If we received an affirmative nod in return to the honk, one of the kids would run up to the house with the crab. At the time, this act seemed noble enough, but I never thought past that moment. It can be a significant burden on an Elder to have to prepare a crab or any other wild food. Cecilia told us that one of the strictest rules to be followed is that food taken to the Elders "must always be fully prepared." The burden of food preparation should never be placed on the Elder. This made total sense, especially in light of the fact that cooking a few more crab would be an insignificant amount of extra work when one is already cooking several dozen. A few additional minutes of easy and pleasurable work on the part of the giver could certainly be a relief to the Elder on the receiving end. A small effort on the part of one person can be a wonderful gift to the other.

I now realize that a fairly strict set of guidelines could have made that sharing much more meaningful for both the Elders and myself.

Another food rule that struck me as a powerful caring tool was the fact that a certain percentage of the main courses of every meal were designated for Elders. Most of us get in a hurry, we forget, we rationalize, we find it easy to not do what we promised ourselves that we would do. However, most of us are creatures of habit, and once we form a habit of preparing that little bit extra, we will find it easy to do our ethical duty to the Elders. Making the extra bit will become automatic, because it is a personal rule—just something that we do.

There were other "rules" related to us by Cecilia that were easy—an insignificant amount of work for the giver that would mean a great deal to any Elder. But these were all kindnesses which would only reach their full potential if practiced as a routine part of one's life. They all have to be built into our personalities to become truly effective.

I fully realize that what worked for Cecilia Martz as a child may not always work in an urbanized society such as that found in Kodiak, Alaska. And I fully realize that in Western culture, where most of our food comes from the grocery store, that to share a bit of everything would be a financial burden on most of us. My evening with Cecilia did, however, set my mind to work with what I could do within my own schedule and within my own financial limits.

And, as I begin to build our new fish smoker in the next few months . . . I will designate one rack on the top as the Elder rack.

When my fishermen friends tell me to come down to the boat to "take what I want," I now make it a habit to take a few extra, and when my wife and I grill those salmon and black cod, we cook a few extra fillets for the Elders down the street. It's little trouble for us and the response we get is magical. When making a month's worth of kindling, it is only twenty minutes extra work to fill a box that can be left on an Elder's steps. And, as I begin to build our new fish smoker in the next few months (thanks to Cecilia) I will designate one rack on the top as the Elder rack.

Athabascan Region: YKSD Gets Four-Year Language Grant

by Susan Paskvan

The Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) was recently awarded a U.S. Department of Education grant entitled "A Collaborative Partnership to Improve English Language Skills and Native Athabascan Language in a Rural Alaska School District." This funding supports a four-year project and establishes a formal partnership between YKSD, the Interior Athabascan Tribal College and the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC).

The language development grant has four strands to improve the Native and English Languages in the nine YKSD villages. Certified teachers have an opportunity to seek a reading endorsement, Native language endorsement and/or masters of education degree. The paraprofessionals (teacher aides) have an opportunity to earn a certificate or associate of applied science degree in Native language.

Two of the activities benefit the students and families of YKSD communities. Students in sixth through twelfth grade have been targeted by this grant to lower the dropout rate and to increase test scores. A one-week language and culture camp in the fall and spring of each year will be held in each of the nine villages. Students will learn their Koyukon or Lower Tanana Athabascan language through cultural activities. They must keep a journal (in both English and Denaakk'e) of their activities. A summer language immersion camp will also be held in which students may earn high school and college credit.

Students will learn their Koyukon or Lower Tanana Athabascan language through cultural activities.

In partnership with the Tanana Chiefs Conference Interior Athabascan Tribal College (IATC), family language immersion programs will be implemented. The mentor-apprentice model will be used so that whole families can learn the language from a fluent speaker.

In the spring of 2003, the regional school board of YKSD approved a half-hour of Athabascan language instruction for grades K–2. The family immersion program will benefit these children by allowing them to practice at home what they are learning in school.

Jane learns how to split wood with a hammer that Bill Williams (on right) taught them to carve. Gareth looks on. Student said, Kkun' destlaał *which means "I am splitting wood."*

The first language camp was held this past summer 20 miles downriver from Hughes, Alaska at the camp of Bill and Madeline Williams. Fourteen students in K–12 from Hughes and nine students from Koyukuk participated. Other camps were held in Koyukuk as well as a day camp in Kaltag. The tribal councils in the villages have also supported the camps.

Student responses to the camps have been positive. Kirchelle wrote "We went to five different classes during the day. Our classes were saying moose parts in Athabascan, saying fish names in Athabascan, bead work with Jean Linus, journal writing when the day was over."

"We went to five different classes during the day. Our classes were saying moose parts in Athabascan, saying fish names in Athabascan . . . "

One of the students who will be in the family immersion program, Angela wrote, "It was really cool seeing my younger brothers learning their language and it was cool that my dad was one of the teachers because he knows the language. He is also learning a little bit as he was teaching because there was some words that he did not know. I thought that was very cool of the teachers and the district to do that, help us to learn our language."

Susan Paskvan has been hired as the language development coordinator for the project. Patrick Marlow (ANLC) and Beth Leonard (IATC) are currently partner liaisons and will be working closely with Susan over the course of the project. If you have any questions about the program, please call Susan at YKSD, 907-374-9424 or e-mail spaskvan@yksd.com.

Madeline Williams is teaching Angela how to knit a fishnet. Students said, Taabeeł destl'oo, *which means "I am knitting a fishnet."*

Fellowships Awarded

by Beth Leonard, TCC

The Denaqenage' Career Ladder Program, a grant-funded partnership between the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Alaska Native Language Center, the Interior Athabascan Tribal College (IATC) and the Gateway and Lake and Peninsula School Districts, is pleased to announce that the following participants have been awarded competitive fellowships for the 2003–2004 academic year:

- Lily Larose Luke, Tanacross
- Michelle Ravenmoon, Dena'ina
- Shauna Sagmoen, Dena'ina
- Amy VanHatten, Koyukon
- Verna Wagner, Tanacross

In order to be eligible for a fellowship, candidates must be accepted into the Denaqenage' Career Ladder Program and enrolled in a UAF M.Ed. or B.A. program with a major focus on Athabascan language study and teaching. Preference is given to students studying or intending to study Tanacross, Upper Tanana or Dena'ina. However, consideration is given to applicants studying other Alaska Athabascan languages as well. Applications for the 2004–2005 competition will be sent out in March, 2004. If you have any questions about the fellowship application process or would like to be included on our application mailing list, please call Beth Leonard, IATC Language Coordinator at 1-800-478-6822, ext.3287 or e-mail bleonard@tananachiefs.org.

Southeast Region:
Native American Perspective and the Classroom Experience

by Ted A. Wright, Southeast Alaska Tribal College

When I am asked to represent the Native view on one or another issue, I usually say something like, "It really isn't fair for me to try and speak *for* Indians, indigenous or Native peoples. Just like it wouldn't be fair for me to ask you to speak for all Caucasian, Euro-American, middle-class men from the Northwest." I typically add that I can speak *about* Native peoples, insofar as I have studied my own and others. But even then, the information I provide is generalized from a variety of sources and interpretation of information, especially when it has to do with Native tribes, is a risky business. So, the question becomes, to what extent can I represent Indian peoples and how do I approach the issue in practice, as a teacher?

Well, for one thing, I have studied Native groups other than my own. It would be impossible to teach and learn in a Native American Studies program or a tribal college if we were confined only to talking about our own tribe, clan or community. But the issue here is one of perspective, not knowledge. It is possible to have access to and familiarity with a vast store of information about Native peoples and indigenous life ways, but to speak from a group's perspective a person pretty much has to be a part of that group. And even then, each group has different and competing voices. For example, among my people I am considered mixed-blood and somewhat non-traditional, depending on whom you ask. I might also be labeled as over-educated, elite, middle-class—one who has been away to school and come back home. Also, I am a northern Kogwaantan (wolf clan), transplanted by virtue of my grandmother's journey to the middle of Tlingit country—Sitka. Well, you get the picture. Now we are talking issues of identity and group affiliation. And in the era of self-determination and casino gaming, these are muddy waters in which to wade.

It would be impossible to teach and learn in a Native American Studies program or a tribal college if we were confined only to talking about our own tribe, clan or community.

So let's simplify what is decidedly a complex issue. There is tremendous diversity among Native American peoples, certainly more so than within the general American population. The reason for this is that American Indian and Alaska Native peoples, through their cultural, political and social institutions, tend to reject the notion that we should melt into the all-consuming culture that is America in the 20th and 21st centuries. Does that mean we don't wear Levi's or drive sport utility vehicles? Or that pizza doesn't taste good and we don't watch baseball? Hardly. It just means that we try harder than most to maintain an intact culture, one that is distinct from the American way. We sing our songs, dance our dances and eat our foods. We want to remember our own histories, practice our own brand of spirituality. We want to be Native in a society that tries to dominate and assimilate. But it isn't necessarily true that Indian people understand how different we all are, one tribe to the next, even considering our similarities.

. . . Alaska Native peoples, through their cultural, political and social institutions, tend to reject the notion that we should melt into the all-consuming culture that is America in the 20th and 21st centuries. . . . We sing our songs, dance our dances and eat our foods. We want to remember our own histories, practice our own brand of spirituality.

I was reminded of this again a while back when I read an article about a presentation on tribal sovereignty by a Lac Courte d'Oreilles tribal councilmen published on the American Indian Policy Center website. The Councilmen said:

> We are seen as different and we are different. American Indians have a special legal relationship with the United States government . . . The way of life for Native Americans is different. Tribes have worked to

> maintain their sovereignty because American Indians want to maintain their traditional ways . . . We're not a part of the melting pot. We are a proud people. Many people do not understand this, creating conflict and misunderstanding. There is a lack of accurate information about American Indians in mainstream educational institutions. Schools generally do not teach about traditional American Indian values and beliefs, or about the legal and historical basis of tribal sovereignty. Often times, questions that non-Indians ask about American Indians reflect cultural, legal and historical misunderstanding . . . We're continually asked by non-Native people "why don't you want to bring wealth and possession to your people?" and "Why do you continuously pursue and promote the treaties from so many years ago?" Questions of this sort reveal ignorance about the relationship between Indian tribes and the U.S. government, and differences in values. This ignorance could be reduced if more schools taught accurate information about American Indians.

One of the reasons I read the article is because I noticed in the beginning that the speaker is from the Wolf clan of the Ojibwe people. I thought, hey, I'm from the Wolf clan of the Tlingit people. I also served on the tribal council for my people in the mid-80s. And I have had an abiding interest in the issue of sovereignty. So I felt like I had a lot in common with the Ojibwe councilmen, like he was my counterpart from a different tribe. Well, his statements are reasonable and he has obviously thought deeply about sovereignty and why he fights the battles he does. But after I read it a second time, I began to think about how much the speaker generalized and the wheels started to turn. On a napkin (I was at a restaurant) I began to list his statements that reflected a Native American perspective:

We, American Indians, Native Americans, Tribes:

- are seen as different and we are different,
- have a special legal relationship with the United States government,
- want to maintain . . . traditional ways,
- are not part of the melting pot,
- are a proud people.

As you have noticed, the speaker also discusses the fact that many of the misconceptions about Indians could be remedied if schools would provide students with accurate information. But this begs the question, "What is accurate information and who decides?" I agree with the Ojibwe speaker that we are seen as different, our tribes have a special relationship with the U.S. government; we want to maintain our traditional ways; we are not part of the melting pot in the sense that we are in the pot and striving not to melt and, of-course, we are proud to be who we are. But from my point of view, the truth about perspective lies in the details. Getting and using accurate information about tribal, Indian people is not simply a matter of sharing the most common set of facts, or providing a superficial description.

To illustrate this point consider my own people, the Tlingit. How would I help apathetic, less eager students learn about my people's politics, history, language, culture and more to the point, their *perspective*? After all, there are about twenty sub-regional and community groupings within our extant panhandle territory and dozens of related and unrelated clan and clan house affiliations within each of those sub-regions. Even to begin to talk about larger issues of Tlingit tribal history, politics, law, spirituality and language, the basic cultural family and clan connections must be covered. And yet, when Tlingit people themselves get up in front of a group and say *the Tlingit* this and *the Tlingit* that, they sometimes forget they are only talking for the Wolf people of the Salmon Stream Tribe of the farthest north Tlingit people, for example. There are a few Elders that do not forget this, but they are seldom invited to speak at the kinds of gatherings where people talk about Tlingit people as a generic subset of Alaska Natives inhabiting the Southeast panhandle.

So, what's a teacher to do? When I first started in education, nobody had a clue. Nowadays we understand that sticky issues of Native or indigenous perspective are actually opportunities for students to take on a subject in-depth. So don't be afraid to bring people like me into your classrooms. But do make certain your students aren't afraid to ask direct questions about comments that over-generalize and categorize issues and people. Your students will be better for it and it is possible that the speakers will be better for it as well. I am inviting teachers I work with to use materials developed through the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative—in cooperation with the Southeast Alaska Tribal College and a number of school districts—to open an ongoing dialogue about S.E. Native peoples through an in-depth analysis of the places they live and the cultures they still maintain today.

. . . make certain your students aren't afraid to ask direct questions about comments that over-generalize and categorize issues and people. Your students will be better for it and it is possible that the speakers will be better for it as well.

Cup'ik Region: The Mapping Project Names Ancestral Sites

by John Angaiak

The mapping project conducted by Qissunamiut (Chevak) and Hooper Bay takes us a step back to the time when our ancestors truly lived a pure traditional Cup'ik lifestyle. The places become alive when reliving a time when ancestors could name hundreds of lakes and rivers. Knowing sites meant knowing where the food was located. Knowing meant survival through many years to the present. It was a hard but clean living. They took care of the land to subsist on. The knowledge of the land itself was a history of their ancestors, for so long they had to endure with courage.

You can visualize Elders in their younger days traveling the rivers by kayak and seal skin boats, often for days. They camped for months at a time gathering food to see themselves through harsh winters. Out there were hundreds of sites they could choose to subsist on, knowing every site by heart and how far away it was. It was the land Cup'iks knew so well. They had to know it, and take care of it. It was everything—food, shelter and preservation of their distinct culture. These people left us a lasting imprint that we have always had land that will last beyond the future of generations to come. If we could read their minds and hear their voices now, this story would read like no other.

Qissunamiut and Hooper Bay, Alaska are taking a step back in time to preserve their future. They are working on their mapping project. It is a painstaking process. The terrain has hundreds of lakes, rivers, rolling mountains and tributaries to name—all according to their living Elders. This project is a defining moment for both villages as teacher John Pingayaq put it, "This is a way to revive and preserve the heritage and the culture of the people." Similarly, Mr. Bosco Olson of Hooper Bay echoed, "To preserve and record the original names and locations of rivers . . . areas of fish, berries, plants, etc., camping . . . a lot of poignant memories for the Elders returned." He went on to say that "The Elders despair at the loss of knowledge of our lands . . . especially our hunting areas."

The application of the mapping project seems broad. For instance, search and rescue teams can use the information in winter and summer in the vicinity of the two villages. Mr. Olson points out, "In some winters, there is a rash of lost snowmachine riders. If they know or recognize an area, if equipment breaks down, stops, etc., then the traveler(s) can and will be able to relay their location or stop and remain till rescue arrives."

Mr. Pingayaq credits private sources of funding for making this project possible, such as Ford Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Tides Foundation and Lannan Foundation. This mapping project is one of the few that were funded in 1999, along with other tribes across the country and in Hawaii.

Mr. Pingayaq went on to say that "Our vision and purpose in undertaking this project is to document the traditional knowledge and subsistence lifestyle of the Qissunaq people, to create new linkages between the Elders and the youth through the transmission of traditional ecological and cultural knowledge of our homeland, to inspire other communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region to undertake Native mapping projects and to convey to the outside world some of our traditional ways of knowing."

Through the mapping project come the voices of ancestors. They beckon their children to know their land by names. They want them to know that their land is not a vast empty spread. The map comes alive.

Throughout the mapping project, Hooper and Qissunamiut involved Elders as advisors who are knowledgeable about the area. Students are involved. The students from the Cultural Heritage Program at Qissunamiut School interview Elders as part of their Social Studies and History courses about the land that surrounds them. It is about the study of their origins.

When asked about how the

mapping project would be used in the schools, Bosco Olson summarized, "To be able to have curriculum at the school and even at home, sitting down with your parents—especially grandparents—and going through the maps could be a way of telling traditional camping, hunting, fishing areas that they or others may have utilized . . . with a little more probing, the Elders would name the area where they had been . . . Elders despair at the loss of knowledge of our own lands . . ."

Through the mapping project come the voices of ancestors. They beckon their children to know their land by names. They want them to know that their land is not a vast empty spread. The map comes alive. When you look under the microscope, it is dotted with hundreds of their remains spread across the horizon to let their grandchildren know that the land had been claimed already on their behalf. We can imagine those people that lived before them, too. They walked and lived on the same land. There is no such thing as an empty or unclaimed land. The remains of their ancestors cannot be counted because they are too numerous. There are too many out there that will stay there forever so that their grandchildren will have land upon which to subsist.

The mapping project has taken on a new meaning as well. It is going to be part of the school curriculum very soon. No politics, period. It is going to be taught. All it takes now is to put the finishing touches on a little more before it is ready.

Finally, as a Yup'ik/Cup'ik coordinator for AKRSI program, I am very privileged to work with Qissunamiut and Hooper Bay planners on the mapping project that will make a big difference for their students. This project complies with our internal mission between their office and mine that says, "Our mission is to be leaders in recreating our timeless Yup'ik/Cup'ik past through innovation."

Yup'ik Region: News Briefs

by Ester Ilutsik

YEA Approves Bylaws

The Yupiit School District Native Educators held a meeting in Akiak, where the interim board presented a draft of bylaws that were approved by those present at the meeting. A board of directors was selected which included the following individuals: Sophie Kasayulie, Annie Kinegak, Maggie Williams, Mary Alexie, Katie George, Debbie Jackson, Threas Nose, Alberta Dementle and Fred Pavela, representing a little over 20 professional and para-professionals within the Yupiit School District (Akiak, Akiachak and Tuluksak). Sophie Kasayulie was elected chairperson; Katie George, vice-chairperson; and Theresa Nose, secretary/treasurer. The organization will be known hereafter as Yupiit Elitnaurvistet Association (YEA), as approved by the newly elected board of directors.

Bristol Bay Pilots New Teacher Orientation

The Bristol Bay communities of New Stuyahok, Dillingham and Togiak are piloting a "new" concept where Cross-Cultural Teacher Orientation classes are site-based with a facilitator who is an active member of the community and supported by a local indigenous cultural group. The other major difference of this class is that it is not a one- or two-day work session with much cultural knowledge crammed into a couple of hours, but flows from the beginning of school to the end of the school year. The site-based facilitator works with Elders within the community and presents information in a monthly seminar format or activity-based sessions that represent the local culture. The participants are new teachers to the region, teachers who have been in the community and local paraprofessionals—many of whom represent the local indigenous culture, but all working hand-in-hand to learn about the local culture in depth. This format is utilized so that those enrolled in the course will have time to "digest" the information that is presented, have the opportunity to integrate cultural theories and methods into the classroom and, most importantly, will serve as a link in bringing the teachers into the community and the community into the classroom

Reflections

by Mike Hull

The junior high students of Russian Mission spent most of September at subsistence camps along Tucker Slough, Mountain Creek and other nameless streams. They learned many skills and they gained experiences that will become their stories told again and again in years to come. This is a reflection on the journey back to the village:

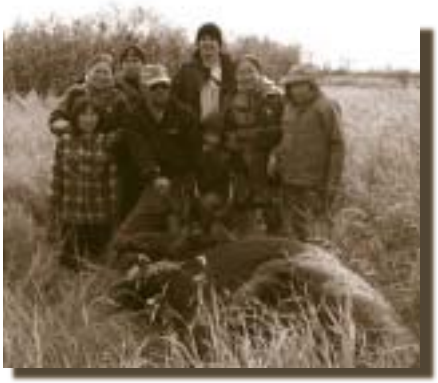
The village seemed a distant life
and all the students wanted to stay in the wild
—so did I—
but the cold was chasing us out of our camps
and said it is time
to begin the in-between time
as we wait for winter.

the canoes were frozen to the grass at the shore line
on the morning of our departure
and as we moved quietly down the stream
the ripple of our passing
hissed and crackled—disturbing the fragile ice shelf
that had formed along the shore

beavers had been out at this time on other days
but not today . . .
as we turned from the stream into Mountain Creek
the sun rose over our shoulder
lighting gold and yellow the autumn hillside before us
and gold and pink the glassy calm waters
of the creek

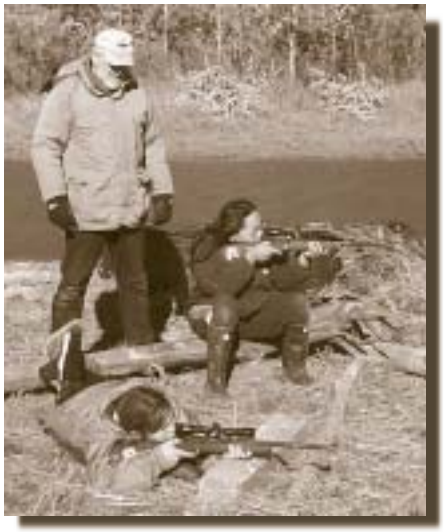
Water slurped into the vortex formed by the motion of each paddle
occasionally there was the thud of a paddle against the canoe
but mostly . . . we were silent.

As the sun climbed
it seemed to lift the stillness from around us
and the young eagle that we had seen frequently
but always close to his nest . . .
flew toward us from the west—
and, when certain that we had seen him—and he us



Max brought down this moose. The students butchered it and packed it back to camp.

Pauline shows Solomon and Oxenia how to pluck geese.



Richard teaches Charlotte and Maxine how to handle rifles.

he circled and soared effortlessly—climbing above the trees . . .
into a brightening sky
glanced once more our way
and drifted south out of sight.
this season we had watched him grow—gain confidence
in the strength and expanse of his wings
he too set out on this morning
to measure his stamina on distances unknown

three days later,
on the final stage of our journey homeward
now back on the Yukon
we lashed nine canoes together
with birch poles
to form a raft
one boy was growing more impressed
as he saw this raft coming together . . .
You are about to do something none of your parents have done . . .I said.
he replied, "but our ancestors did . . ."

The students from all three camps gathered to begin the last stage of the trip down Tucker Slough.

At the end of a long day on the river
we had to cut across the Yukon
across the north wind
to land at the beach in front of the village.
Groups of six had rotated on the paddles
to keep us in the current throughout the day's journey
now all eighteen took places along the edge of the raft
and grabbed at the Yukon with their paddles
pulling their way across the river.

Wind whipped the water from raised paddles
and sprayed across the lashed canoes
waves splashed over the sides
soaking everyone
one boy, perched at the back of the raft
studied the distant bluff—a smile on his face
as he deftly pointed the raft where it needed to go.

All day long I had pushed from my kayak
now I felt the raft lift and pull away from me
as these young Yup'iks
moved out on their own
in harmony with the river, the wind
and their ancestors . . .

We dare great things when we commit ourselves
to sharing in the growth of young people
We are sometimes rewarded with great moments.

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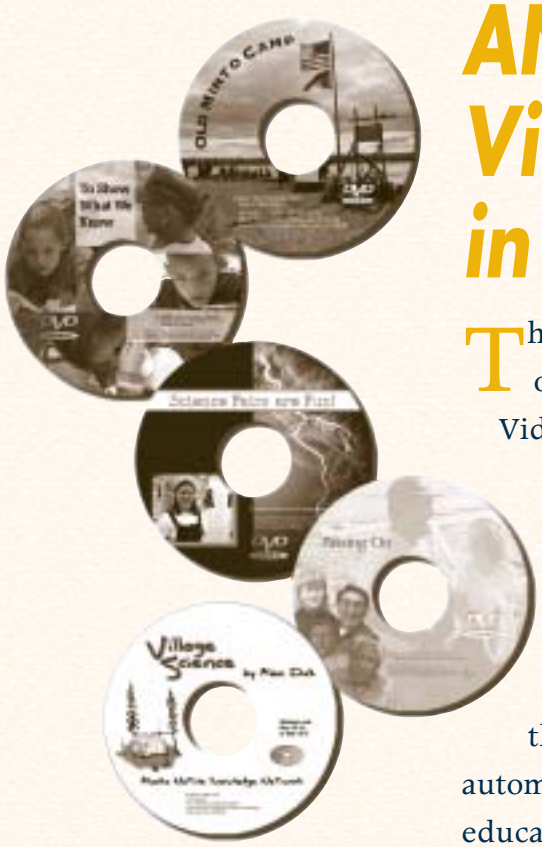

ANKN Curriculum and Videos Now Available in CD and DVD format!

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network has been working on converting all our available VHS format videos to DVD Video. We have five ready and will continue to make others available as they come along.

We are also pleased to offer our Village Science curriculum as an interactive CD. This CD is self-contained (needs no additional software to view) and works on both Windows and Mac platforms. There's even a test at the end of each chapter that students can take and be automatically scored on! The Village Science CD is free for educators; the DVD Videos are $3 each. For more information, contact the ANKN office at 907-474-5086.

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