

Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat Quliaqtuaṇit
Iñupiat Urban Legends:
An Analysis of Contemporary Iñupiat Living in an
Urban Environment

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By

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Abstract

The urban Iñupiat have a story to share with other Iñupiat. It is not blood quantum that defines the Alaska Native. All contemporary Iñupiat have adapted to contemporary times, whether they live in a rural community or in an urban setting. Western influence has affected all of our lives.

The analysis of contemporary Iñupiat living in an urban environment will contribute to the understanding of all Iñupiat today. The adaptations are relevant wherever the Iñupiat live. This is a fairly new research concept, since the situation of urban Iñupiat occupation is occurring more frequently nowadays. This may directly relate to other Alaska Native groups living in an urban environment.

Each Alaska Native group has their own set of Native values. The Native values help define their Native cultural heritage. How the Alaska Native people define who they are is interconnected with the Alaska Native values that the Elders have established to pass on to the future cultural bearers.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction and Rationale

Uvaḡa atiga Asiqḷuq. My Iñupiaq name is Asiqḷuq. I am also Charles Sean Topkok. I am Iñupiaq and Sami, Irish, and Norwegian. My parents are the late Aileen and Clifford Topkok from Teller, Alaska. My father was Iñupiaq and Sami, and his first language was Iñupiaq. My mother was born and raised in Teller, learning to speak a little Iñupiaq. I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska.

My family life, during my childhood, included heritage from both Native and non-Native activities. We ate *niquipiaq* (Iñupiaq food) and non-Native food. We participated in Native social activities including Native games, Iñupiaq singing, and other gatherings. I also participated in non-Native activities, such as the Boy Scouts, basketball, baseball, and other functions. However, my first language is English, using only a few Iñupiaq words in my everyday life.

Growing up in Anchorage in the 1960s and 70s, during a population increase due to the Alaska Pipeline, was challenging. Since my ethnicity is from a mixed heritage, I have witnessed some racial tensions and prejudices from both the Native and non-Native perspective. I have been called derogatory names from non-Native children, and I have often heard hurtful remarks from my full-blooded Native relatives. Substance abuse was usually associated with Native people in Anchorage during my childhood, and it was very evident with some of my relatives, as well with my father. There came a point in my childhood that I did not want to identify myself as a Native.

When I was 18 years old and attending college in Washington, I took a cultural anthropology course. I eventually informed the instructor that I was half Iñupiaq; he encouraged me to submit a paper about my culture. I became more aware that I do not know much about my heritage, Native and non-Native. I called my father to ask questions about our family. It was then that I learned my grandfather, who passed away before I was born, was a reindeer herder. My mother shared with me that her father's first language was Norwegian, but he spoke only English to my mother. I learned more about my family, and I realized that I can embrace the positive aspects about my heritage and dismiss how others stereotype. My mother also shared with me that even though she was born and raised in Teller through a rural subsistence lifestyle, she was teased for being

non-Native. Seeing the pain in her eyes, I felt strongly to learn and appreciate my own diverse heritages and to further appreciate cultures other than my own.

Part of the *Iñupiat Ĥitqusiat* (Iñupiaq Values) is “Responsibility to Tribe”. My interpretation of my responsibility is to learn as much about myself and cultural heritage in order to pass it down to the next generation. I have three sons, and I want them to learn early in their life to appreciate and share who they are and where they come from. We speak English, Norwegian, and a little bit of Iñupiaq at home. We are actively involved with the Pavva Iñupiaq of Fairbanks dance group. We are involved with the local Sons of Norway Fairbanks Chapter. When I help my sons with their schoolwork, I utilize culturally relevant resources from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network website.

I have worked with the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) since April 1997. Through my experiences at ANKN, I continue to work closely with Alaska Native communities and educators, as well as other Indigenous groups worldwide. I have met and listened to Elders share their Native knowledge. I have been informally adopted by Yupiaq Elders, Marie and the late William Tyson. My adopted Tlingit name, given to me by Carol Trebian, is Deikeejaakhw.

Within the recent several years, I have been involved with other activities. I have served as the Vice Chair for the World Eskimo Indian Olympics. I have served on advisory boards for Teacher’s Experiencing the Arctic and Antarctic (TEA), Teachers and Researchers Exploring and Collaborating (TREC), and Imaginarium Science Outreach. I am a brown belt in Shotokan Karate. I have been invited to participate in various meetings, including Digital Collectives in Indigenous Cultures and Communities Meeting, sponsored by the University of Michigan; Preserving Cultural Heritage, sponsored by UNESCO; Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative; and Bridging the Poles – International Polar Year, sponsored by the National Science Foundation. I thoroughly enjoy working with and appreciating all cultures.

In mid October during the late 1990s, I was on my way to Gambell to work with educators to catalog their cultural resources. I was able to spend some time in Nome, which is south of Teller, waiting for my connecting flight. Though I had never been to Nome, I felt like I had come “home.” The smell of the salt water was the first thing my senses experienced. I felt the humidity and the wind. After I arrived in Gambell, had free

time in the evening, and ate some dried fish with seal oil, I walked to the beach and watched and listened to the distant water. I was inspired to sing an Iñupiaq song I had made up honoring our parents and grandparents. In the distance, I observed a walrus swimming closer to where I was. Though this was only a short visit in this area, my *ilitqusiḡ*, or spirit, felt welcomed back. However, I feel that I live an Iñupiaq lifestyle with my family even while I live in an urban setting.

Statement of the Situation

The Iñupiat originally occupied the coastal areas in northwest Alaska, and still do today (ANLC, 2007). Presently, there are Iñupiat residing in other parts of Alaska, as well as other parts of the world. Through blood quantum, urban Iñupiat residents are still recognized as Iñupiat. Is blood quantum what defines one's cultural heritage?

As I mentioned before, I grew up in Anchorage, but now reside in Fairbanks. During one of the Alaska Native Educators' Conference in Anchorage, a Native educator stated to me that she didn't know that I was Iñupiaq. Another Native educator overheard the conversation and offered to the other educator, "Yes, but he's an 'urban Native'."

In the early 2000s, I spent a few days in an Iñupiaq village. I visited one of my wife's relatives, enjoying *niqipiaq*. I shared with her that my wife and I speak a little Iñupiaq at home with our boys. I also shared that our family started an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks, bringing other Iñupiat together to share and learn our cultural heritage. She responded that my sons are more Iñupiat than the children in her village, since many of the children did not participate in cultural activities.

Kawagley states that through Western contact, Native people experience an unbalance of the self (Kawagley, 1997). He writes, "The ruptures allowed some aspects of Native characteristics to flow out or become modified by allowing new fragmented ideas, ways of being, thinking, behaving and doing to seep in. This has caused much confusion among the Native people." In order to heal the self, Kawagley suggests that Native people utilize their five senses and become intimate about place.

Bielawski suggests that the Western and Indigenous epistemological collision creates a "cross-cultural epistemology" (Bielawski, 1990). She writes, "knowledge

changes on both sides of the border between cultures in contact.” Contemporary Iñupiat have been influenced by Outsiders.

The rural villages in Alaska have been influenced by Outsiders. For example, there is basketball, television, video games, motorized vehicles, etc. Angela Huntington, an Athabascan Elder from Galena, states, “You know, there's too much this TV, Nintendo and whatever. You name it. They got their face in that. I don't know what they learn from that. That's what's spoiling our young generation that I know” (ANKN, 2007).

Manii|aq was born in the early 1800s and is known as an Iñupiaq prophet (Alaskool, 2007). He prophesized, “[the] lifestyle of the Iñupiat would be dramatically changed—referring to how life would be easier because of new technologies which the new people would bring to them.” The lifestyle of the Iñupiat has changed significantly in both the urban and rural setting.

Aknik Paul Green expresses his concern that the new generation will not learn their Native language or songs (Green, 1959). He states, “I think some days these Eskimo new generation will forget how to talk Eskimo language - they all be talking English. Also forget Eskimo dances.” Iñupiat Elders continue to express a concern that the Iñupiaq lifestyle is at-risk for being passed down to our future cultural bearers. I feel a responsibility to the Iñupiat that I must learn about the Iñupiaq lifestyle to pass that knowledge on to my sons. I feel certain that other Iñupiat share the same concern, whether living in a rural or urban setting. Therefore, the accountability of my research goes to all Iñupiat, but I can only interpret accounts from participants with whom I encounter.

The situation that is defined is circumstantial. Circumstances have happened so that some Iñupiat live in an urban setting. The reason behind the circumstances depends on the individuals, as it is different for each family. The question is how has each family maintained their identity as Iñupiaq? Each Iñupiaq have a story to tell. Each urban Iñupiaq family will gain knowledge about being Iñupiat from this research. Each urban Iñupiaq person has a story to tell, and all stories are *Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat Quliaqtuanit*, Iñupiat Urban Legends.

Iñupiaq Dance Group in an Urban Environment

The late Chief William Tyson, a Yup'ik Elder from St. Mary's, Alaska, moved to Anchorage and noticed that there were no Yup'ik dance groups available for urban students (ASD, n.d.). In 1983, he decided to start a dance group so that the youth in Anchorage would be able to learn more about Native culture. Eventually, the Greatland Traditional Dancers were formed as a non-profit organization. Greatland has performed not only in Alaska and the Lower 48, but they also have performed internationally, including in Japan. William and his wife Marie were the cultural-bearers for the group.

Greatland is a community dance group. Anyone interested in learning about the Yup'ik culture and dance is encouraged to join. Mr. and Mrs. Tyson also taught Yup'ik dances at cultural camps for urban Native youth for several summers. I worked as a counselor at the cultural camp when I first met them. The counselors were learning the motion dances along with the campers. After getting to know the Elders informally throughout the camp, Mr. and Mrs. Tyson began paying attention to how well I was learning the dances. Whenever I made a mistake, they made the whole group practice the song all over again from the beginning. They wanted to make sure that I learned the songs and motions properly. I eventually joined the Greatland Traditional Dancers. Even though I am Iñupiaq, the group welcomed me, and Mr. and Mrs. Tyson basically adopted me.

When I first moved from Anchorage to Fairbanks, I continued to work with urban Native youth in the field of education. I taught the songs and dances that I learned from the Tysons. I am more than happy to share what I have learned, being encouraged to do so by Mrs. Tyson. However, since I am Iñupiaq, I wanted to learn Iñupiaq songs and dances. My wife and I were also being asked by other Iñupiaq community members in Fairbanks to start an Iñupiaq dance group. I had always replied that I was too busy with work to organize a group.

As I was working as a Home-School Liaison (Counselor) for the Alaska Native Education Department in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, I continued to teach the dances to students and teachers, while yearning to learn more about my cultural heritage. When my first son was born, a Tlingit Elder suggested to me to play

any type of Native music to my baby, so that he can grow up appreciating Native songs and culture.

During this time, I was taking a college class at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Elementary (Beginning) Iñupiaq Eskimo. My Iñupiaq language instructor was from Anaktuvak Pass and knows all of their songs and dances. I helped him sing at a Native potluck. I asked him to teach me any Iñupiaq *sayuun*, or motion dances, but he replied that I needed to make up my own songs and dances.

Needless to say, I became very frustrated and disappointed. I wanted to learn more Iñupiaq *sayuun* dances passed down for generations. After all, I was part of the next generation of future cultural-bearers at the time. At an elementary school, a teacher asked me if I knew any dances about the raven. I took my Iñupiaq language instructor's advice and created my own Iñupiaq *sayuun*. I decided to create a motion dance from one of our Iñupiaq legends passed down for thousands of years: the Fox and the Raven.

Eventually, my first son started pre-school, attending a program sponsored by the Fairbanks Native Association. He grew up listening to all types of Alaska Native music through the exposure to major Native cultural yearly events held in Fairbanks. One day, my son came home singing an Athabascan song all on his own accord. Though I felt very proud that he knew a Native song and felt compelled to sing it by himself, I also felt an urgency to have him learn and sing from his Iñupiaq cultural heritage. Rather than trying to place blame, or even try to change my son's pre-school curriculum, I know that it is ultimately my responsibility, as an Iñupiaq parent, to be actively involved in my son's Iñupiaq education. Even though I had been too busy to start an Iñupiaq dance group, I decided to make time so that my children could grow up singing Iñupiaq songs all by themselves.

In 1999, I sought out other Iñupiat people living in Fairbanks. During the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO), there are usually several Iñupiaq dance groups performing. This is the time of year is when I had previously been asked to start an Iñupiaq dance group. I was able to re-generate interest during WEIO, gathering contact information for those interested in Iñupiaq dance and culture. After having a couple of potluck meetings to find out about the experience level of potential members, to get acquainted with each other, and to arrange the best practice schedule, we started to have

regular meetings. At one point, our newly formed dance group had four generations from one family. Barnhardt writes about teaching in an urban setting, “Students and teachers can form clusters that function as a cohesive unit with a support system based on personalized relationships.” (Barnhardt, 1998) Organizing an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks established one support system of urban Iñupiat.

After a few months, our group was asked to perform for a Native Youth Leadership conference in Fairbanks. Just by word of mouth, our Iñupiaq dance group performed at several meetings and conferences. At the very beginning of the formation of our group, we wanted to make sure that learning Iñupiaq dance and culture was a fun experience. We also wanted to involve our children as much as possible with our cultural heritage. After about one year of practicing and performing, I felt that we needed to identify and establish our own name for the group. I offered several suggestions for the whole group to decide. Our group decided on “Pavva”, Kawerak dialect meaning, “away from the sea; towards the mountains.” The group chose this name because they live away from the Coastal region where their parents, grandparents, or even the members, originally lived.

The Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks encourages anyone, Native or non-Native, interested in learning about our culture to join our group. Members of our dance group include Iñupiaq people from all over the Iñupiaq region. We have members from the Bering Strait, NANA (Northwest Arctic), and Arctic Slope regions. We have learned at least one song from each region to honor our ancestors, while acknowledging the origins of the dances abiding by the *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge* (AANE, 2000). We also perform songs that we have created. One song that we perform is the *Iñupiat Iñitqusi*, our Iñupiaq Values. The motions represent each Iñupiaq value from the NANA region. The motions are adaptations from words and phrases in American Sign Language.

I have seen personal and cultural growth in members of our dance group. Members are able to present the difference between Iñupiaq and Yup'ik styles of dance and drumming. They can explain the meanings behind the *sayuun* dances. Some members can even identify where the dances originate just by listening to the songs. There are some members who used to be extremely shy, not being able to dance in front of people

or even say their own name. I have seen all the youth involved with Pavva, including my three sons, express pride about their cultural heritage through dance and interaction with the audience. At one time, we had over 20 people dancing at a performance.

Pavva is a fairly young dance group, compared to some of the dance groups that have been around for generations. Hence, some of our dance group members were hesitant to perform when other Iñupiaq dance groups were participating. However, I believe that we have received cultural validation, particularly at two separate events. In 2007, Pavva performed for the Alaska Federation of Natives Elders' reception at the University of Alaska Museum. All of the Iñupiaq Elders expressed gratitude that there is an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks for the Iñupiat living here. One Elder said, "Keep it up!" In 2009, Pavva performed at WEIO for the first time. Other Iñupiaq dance groups said to Pavva, "The more...the merrier." They were stating that they were glad that there is an Iñupiaq dance group available in Fairbanks.

Kawagley and the Norris-Tulls write, "Alaska Native students were forbidden to speak their native language in the schools." (Kawagley, 1998) Historically, there is evidence of missionary influence, particularly regulating Alaska Native cultural practices. There have been some communities that were forbidden by the missionaries to perform any Native dances, which they considered to be an evil practice. I feel that this may have created a group of Iñupiat who still feel that they cannot participate in any Native dancing, either due to religious beliefs, or due to the lack of coordination to even attempt to learn.

Fortunately, this is not true for every community. In September 2009, the community of Noorvik lifted a ban by the missionaries on Native dancing (Arctic Sounder, 2009). The missionary in Noorvik banned Native dancing about 100 years ago. Throughout that time, the community had not been involved with any Native dancing. The Noorvik Elders' Council and Noorvik Friends Church recently lifted the ban, and members of the community have been re-learning their cultural heritage by inviting neighboring villages to help teach them. The opportunity to form a Native dance group is not just limited to the urban environment; it is also relevant to rural communities, re-introducing dance as an essential part of our cultural heritage.

I am very grateful to the late Chief William Tyson for adopting me into his dance group and family. I have learned a lot from him and hope to honor him by practicing his cultural pedagogy. Like Mr. Tyson, Pavva invites anyone interested in learning to participate, with no pressure on performing in front of people. Pavva encourages our youth to learn about who they are and about our ancestors. Whenever a Pavva member makes a mistake, I make the whole group practice the song again from the beginning, but I do try not to humiliate or belittle the dance member. Pavva continues to be involved with educational organizations, volunteering our time to teach about the Iñupiaq culture and dancing.

The Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers and other urban Iñupiat have stories about how the *Iñupiat H̄itqusīat* has been passed down from their ancestors. Pavva reinforces that we are Iñupiat, no matter where we live, and that we have a responsibility to pass down our knowledge to our future cultural-bearers. Their stories are part of the *Iñiqpaġmiut Iñupiat Quliaqtuanit*, Iñupiat Urban Legends.

Literature Review

My research studies how the urban Iñupiat maintains their cultural heritage. I have not been able to find any documentation regarding this exact subject, including other Alaska Native groups. There are some resources dealing with elements of my research. For example resources do address the *Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt* (Iñupiat Values), urban influences, settlement situations, cultural change, and adaptations.

Though there are resources that address elements of my master's project, I will focus on nine documents for my literature review. Seven documents are in written format, while the last two are films. The documents include:

Urban Inuit

Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native memoir

Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A memoir of Alaska and the real people

Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt

Lore of the Iñupiat: The Elders Speak

Growing Up Native in Alaska

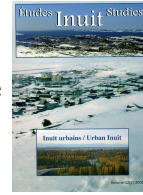
Authentic Alaska: Voices of its Native writers

Qallunajatut: Urban Inuk

Asveq, The Walrus Hunter

Urban Inuit

This publication was produced by the Inuksiutiit Katimajiit Association inc. and the Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones, a journal for the Études/Inuit/Studies produced twice a year. There are six papers focusing on the theme of the Urban



Inuit. The contributors address issues from three countries: Greenland, Canada, and the United States. The guest editors, Noruhiro Kishigami and Molly Lee, state, “In the near future, urban Inuit studies will become increasingly necessary and will constitute an important area of research in both academic and practical spheres.” (Kishigami & Lee, 2008)

The papers in this publication generally address the acculturation of village youth influenced by urban life. There is a paper about a villager visiting Fairbanks, Alaska. However, it does not address an Alaska Native living in an urban environment. Only one essay in this volume deals specifically in Alaska. The essay is from the viewpoint of an Iñupiaq person visiting Fairbanks, not living and growing up in an urban environment.

One particular paper is entitled, “Language, culture and community among urban Inuit in Ottawa.” Donna Patrick and Julie-Ann Tomiak are the contributors for this study. Their research discusses the linguistic and cultural practices of urban Inuit, most of whom are raising families in an urban environment. They discuss the migration into Ottawa, how Inuit adapt to their new surroundings, and programs created to address their needs sponsored by the Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre (OICC).

This resource is very useful to my research, especially the social context of creating a “community” in an urban environment. There are many urban Iñupiat living in Fairbanks and Anchorage. My active participation with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers demonstrates the role of administering cultural practices and values with the urban Iñupiaq community. There are some urban Iñupiat wanting to learn more about who they are through their heritage. There are some Iñupiat who were raised in a village and can share their upbringing. Providing an opportunity to bring urban Iñupiat together creates a sense of community.

Growing Up Native in Alaska



This publication is a collection of interviews by A.J. McClanahan, from 27 potential Alaska Native leaders. There are representatives from each of the thirteen Alaska Native regional corporations who were interviewed and recorded to talk about what their cultures and traditions mean to them.

The stories are mainly about how people grew up with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). One of the interview questions asked how each individual deals with feelings toward ANCSA, clash between profit and culture, and politic clout among board members. However, other questions include upbringing, education, discrimination, identity, and interviewee's heroes.

McClanahan writes, "Some [interviewees] have grown up in an urban environment and are now trying to learn about their cultural heritage, some have chosen to remain in the community where their families have their roots, and others still seek to maintain ties in both the city where they work and the village where they grew up." (McClanahan, 2000) Though many of the people featured in this book may not currently live in an urban environment, the introduced urbanization with contemporary issues like ANCSA has affected their struggle with their own identity as Native people.

This resource is very helpful in regards to my research with urban Iñupiat. Many of the people involved with this book come from a mixed heritage, which mirrors many of the urban Iñupiat. Overall, those interviewed express a strong responsibility to their community, a commitment to maintain their cultural heritage, and a concern for the future generation to know their cultural values. Such issues are very relevant with the urban Iñupiat.

Carl Marrs writes in the foreword, "You don't have to lose your culture by getting an education. The young people who speak frankly on the following pages are all struggling with their identities and where they fit into their respective cultures...We can live in both worlds, and the people in this book are living proof that it's not a question of survival, it's a question of where we want to go."

Fifty Miles From Tomorrow



This book is an autobiographical sketch of Willie Iggiagruk Hensley. He talks about growing up in a village, moving away to get an education, and working to build the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Northwest Arctic Native Association (NANA) Regional Corporation. I felt that it was important to include this publication, since Hensley talks about maintaining his Iñupiaq cultural heritage.

Though this book shows an excellent example of why an Alaska Native person moved to an urban environment, my research concentrates on Iñupiat who have either lived in an urban setting for a long period or were born and raised in a city. There are a couple of strong messages in this book that I feel are important for the urban Iñupiat to remember.

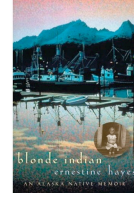
Hensley writes, “To me, the beauty of what became known as Iñupiat Iḡtqusiati-Iñupiat Values-was the fact that they were not material. They were deeply entrenched in the mind and heart and spirit, and entirely transportable. You can be anywhere in the world and retain your Iñupiaq identity and values. You can pursue the highest academic credentials and become as wealthy as Bill Gates and still be the Iñupiaq of whom your forefathers would be proud.”

In the prologue, Hensley writes, “I began to understand how millions of people throughout the world have fought to maintain their identities and unlock the hold of colonial powers on their leaders and resources. We have all tried to find our way amid torrents of change in a world in which others controlled our physical space, as well as our minds, spirits, and identities.”

It is a very well written book. It doesn’t relate directly with my research in regards to how the urban Iñupiat maintains their cultural heritage. However, Hensley’s experiences demonstrate the importance of maintaining his Iñupiaq identity and his responsibility to his tribe.

Blonde Indian

The HAIL (Honoring Alaska's Indigenous Literature) Awards committee in the Southeast Alaska region honored this book in 2008. It is an autobiographical sketch of a Tlingit woman growing up in an Alaskan village, moving out of state, and then returning to her ancestral land. I wanted to include this book to show how one individual is maintaining her cultural heritage.



It is a well-written book about a woman who grew up in a village. Ernestine Hayes eventually left the village to live in the Lower 48. In her later years, she returned back to her hometown. Her grandmother raised her, since her mother was hospitalized for tuberculosis. Her grandmother taught her the traditional Tlingit lifestyle and subsistence. Since she was born with light-colored hair, she describes encountering discrimination from both the Native and non-Native children.

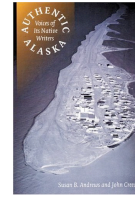
When I first purchased this book, I wanted to see how it compares to my research relating to mixed heritage. I am Iñupiaq, Sami, Irish, and Norwegian. I had three brothers with red hair. One of them could have written a book entitled, “Red-Headed Iñupiat”. There are several urban Iñupiat that I know whom come from mixed heritages. I thought that this would relate directly to my research.

The book doesn't directly relate to my research, because the urban Iñupiat have either lived in an urban environment for a long time, or were born and raised in an urban setting. It is a different situation, because the book talks about a young girl who was raised in a village, then moved out, then returned. It is a great example of some of the reasons Alaska Native people moved into an urban environment. This resource may be a precursor to my research.

This is a very good book. I can see how her experiences are lived with the Southeast Native Values. One of the strongest messages that I got from the book can be found on pages 164-165. Her grandmother encourages Ernestine to “remember who you are,” to know about your cultural heritage.

Authentic Alaska

This publication addresses the contemporary issues that Alaska Native students face while balancing cultural traditions. University students wrote papers describing what it means to be an authentic Alaska Native person. This book is a compilation of the students' essays.



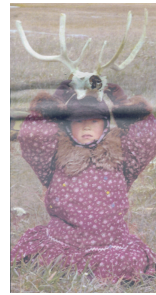
The editors of this book write, “Despite the tremendous challenges in assimilating dramatic cultural changes, this chapter speaks to the extraordinary adaptability, perseverance, and resilience of Alaska’s first people, along with their enduring reverence for tradition.” There is one chapter entitled, “Traditional and Western Cultures.” Students write about the cross-cultural experiences between the two cultures. Julia Jones Anausuk Stalker, an Iñupiaq person in Kotzebue, writes, “Eskimo Dance: A Tradition of my People.” Spencer Rearden, a Yup’ik person in Kotzebue, writes, “Families Help Define the Meaning of ‘Native’.” Geri Reich, an Iñupiaq person in Kotzebue, writes, “Life Ain’t Easy on Anchorage Streets for Iñupiaq from Kotzebue.”

Many of the stories shared in the book are from the perspective of Alaska Native people currently living in a village. The essay “Eskimo Dance” relates to my research with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers. The essay “Families Help Define the Meaning of ‘Native’” relates to how the urban Iñupiat defines being Iñupiaq. The story about Anchorage describes homelessness due to alcoholism, so it does not relate directly to my research.

One of the strongest messages in the book describes our Iñupiat heritage. Charlene Agnatchiaq Ferguson, an Iñupiaq person from Kotzebue, writes, “To me a Native Iñupiaq today is someone who is preserving our land, language, and knowledge, and who is working any way he or she can to pass these traditions on to our children.” I can see how the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers are preserving our cultural heritage through their activities.

Iñupiat Iłitqusiat

This publication looks at what the Iñupiat Iłitqusiat means to the Iñupiat. The editor of this publication states, “Inupiaq across the state graciously offered their time by documenting values in a variety of written formats, sending family photos and taking photographs. We received poetry and short stories, essays and full-length articles. There was no restriction placed on the form of expression.”



The editor continues to explain the process, “To that end, Alaska Newspapers Inc. teamed up with the Inupiat Iłitqusiat program and the Northwest Arctic Borough School District to publish this special edition. For nine months we collected the artistic and written works of Inupiaq students and community members based on the 17 Inupiaq Values as defined by the Spirit Movement in the early 1980s.”

The process of my research is to have the urban Iñupiat be able to express what each Iñupiaq value means to them. There will be no restriction on how they define each Iñupiaq value. Contemporary issues specifically related to the urban setting have a direct relationship to the family values passed down from generation to generation. Each individual interprets each value uniquely, whether they live in a rural setting or an urban setting.

Reggie Joule states, “Inupiat Iłitqusiat is not a program. It is a way of life which we have defined as ours. What has been defined as ‘Inupiaq Values,’ upon closer inspection, are really basic human values. It is what makes us different from other people; not more than someone else and not less than someone else, just different. It is up to us to learn and understand what those differences are and carry them forward.” It is also the similarities with each Iñupiaq value that need closer inspection. In essence, it is a tradition that is redefined, adapting our Iñupiat Iłitqusiat to the urban environment.

Lore of the Iñupiat

This series looks at the Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt from an Elders point of view. Ruthie Tatqaviñ Sampson writes, “Over 400 audio tapes of Elders’ narrations have been collected over the years...One wish of the Elders is for students to choose the good things of the Western culture and the good things of the Inupiaq culture to live a balanced lifestyle.”



Jerry Covey, Superintendent for the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, writes, “The stories contained in this book reinforces the [Iñupiat] values...” Since my research is about the Iñupiat maintaining their cultural heritage in an urban environment, I would like to recognize the importance of knowing what our Elders define as our Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt, Iñupiat values. In order to do that, we need to listen to our Elders’ stories and experiences. I include this series in my literature review, because the stories are rich resources about the Iñupiaq cultural heritage.

The process of how this series is published is similar to how I conduct my research. The Elders were recorded in Kotzebue, sharing their experiences. With my research, at public meetings, the Pavva Iñupiaq dance members are being interviewed informally, talking about what each Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt means to them.

One statement from an Iñupiaq Elder demonstrates how our cultural heritage is passed down from generation to generation. Clinton Iḡnitchiaq Swan shares, “I learned these things by watching my grandfather and uncle. I may not have learned everything they knew how to do, but I learned a lot of the traditional things. So, you see, you can learn a lot from knowledgeable people if you are very observant. Later on, when you need to, you will be able to do those things well yourself. Your descendents, in turn, will watch you and learn and remember how to do those things.”

The Elders’ stories and experiences are part of our cultural heritage. It is our responsibility to our tribe to pass this deep rooted knowledge to our future cultural bearers, making it their cultural legacy.



Urban Inuk

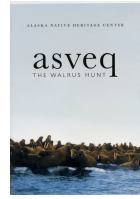
This documentary follows three Inuit living in an urban environment in Montreal, Canada. The film is approximately 50 minutes long, mostly spoken in Inuktitut, with English subtitles. The producer of this documentary also produced the film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*.

One Inuit man moved to Montreal with his girlfriend but ended up living on the streets, homeless. Another person in the film had to go to Montreal for a medical emergency and did not return to his village. The last person interviewed eventually stayed in Montreal after several visits to the city. One of the people highlighted in this documentary is a grandson of an actor in *Atanarjuat*.

The producers describe the documentary, “This film shatters stereotypes and gives audiences a vivid, emotional understanding of the challenges facing those who would live Inuit lives in contemporary urban environments.”

The title of this documentary suggests that it may relate directly to my research. One of the participants in this film does talk about maintaining his cultural heritage, especially when he returns to his girlfriend’s house. He is making a miniature dogsled, a skill taught to him by his grandfather. He states, translated in English, “Like me, a new generation is living in the city down south. I think we are just like this sled. We will keep going forward. We have things to hold on to and a place to put them when we go on our journey. By adapting, we are going forward and we will keep on going.”

Though the people in this film have grown up in a village, and moved to an urban setting, they struggle to find and maintain their Inuit identity. This relates directly to my research on the urban Iñupiat, but many of the urban Iñupiat were born and raised in a city.



Asveq

This video looks at urban youth maintaining their cultural heritage through dance. The film is less than nine minutes in length. It is rated “N” for Native content. On the cover, it states, “This short film shows the unwillingness of Alaska Native youth to lose their culture, and the ability to continue creating drum dances in the traditional way.” The film starts with, “Today many Alaska Native youth are separated from their cultural traditions because they live in an urban environment. But it doesn’t have to be that way.”

This short documentary mirrors the origin of my research. Eight students, after school, participated in a youth program sponsored by the Alaska Native Heritage Center. They learned Yup’ik and Iñupiaq dances, with Stephen Blanchett. This documentary is an outcome of their participation, learning and practicing their cultural heritage in an urban environment. Two of my cousins participated in the youth program and are featured in the documentary.

My research started with my involvement with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. We started the group in order to learn more about our cultural heritage, and most importantly pass our cultural heritage to our youth. In the Pavva By-laws it states, “Each member has effectively demonstrated his or her interest to follow and pass on the Iñupiaq Values set by our Elders.” We invite other urban Iñupiat to join our group. We continue to talk informally with each other about what it is to be Iñupiaq, even though we live in an urban setting.

I want to include *Asveq*, because the idea of maintaining our cultural heritage in an urban environment is not exclusive to those living in Fairbanks. In Anchorage, the youth in this documentary demonstrate a need to show that cultural traditions are being preserved and passed down.

Methodology

Research Questions

Through my research, it is my intention to address three major questions. These questions come from listening to Alaska Elders' concerns about passing Native traditions and cultural heritage to our future generations. Angela Huntington, an Athabascan Elder, states, “The biggest problem in our villages is hard to...really hard to talk to young generation. You know, if we talk to our grandkids or others. They don't believe what we talk about. You know, there's too much this TV, Nintendo and whatever. You name it. They got their face in that. I don't know what they learn from that. That's what's spoiling our young generation that I know.” (ANKN, 2007)

The three major questions I wish to address during my research are:

- How has the detachment of the immersion in an Iñupiaq rural community affected the urban Iñupiat?
- What Iñupiaq activities are currently available for the urban Iñupiat to maintain their cultural heritage?
- What are the immediate and long-term concerns for the education of our future Iñupiaq cultural bearers?

Though my written master's project will focus on the informal discussions with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks, I feel that my overall master's project will be a “living” project. I have published an interactive online discussion board entitled “Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat (Urban Iñupiat) Discussion Board/Cultural Atlas”. This will allow those urban Iñupiat who are not part of the Pavva dance group to address the questions regarding maintaining the Iñupiaq cultural heritage. All urban Indigenous perspectives are welcome to participate.

Interview Questions

It is my intention to make the interviews as comfortable for participants as possible. I hope to make the questions as open-ended as possible, in order to provide an opportunity for participants to express their own identification of the Iñupiaq lifestyle and

concerns. During the interview process, some of the questions will be addressed and answered throughout the interaction.

In 2001, the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers were invited to travel and perform in Finland. However, in order to raise funds, we needed to establish our group as an official non-profit organization. We were beginning to receive honorariums, so necessity was there. We voted on executive officers for our group, and I still am the chair for our group. We needed to submit to the State of Alaska our Articles of Incorporation and By-laws. At the same time, we needed to get from the Internal Revenue Service an Employee Identification Number (EIN), which turned out to be an easy process. Pavva was able to adapt the By-laws and Articles of Incorporation from one of the Native Educator Associations. Pavva wanted to include our *Iñupiat H̄itqusiāt* in our By-laws. During practices, we discuss each value for our own interpretation. The *Iñupiat H̄itqusiāt* included in our By-laws are:

- Knowledge of Language
- Sharing
- Respect for Others
- Cooperation
- Respect for Elders
- Love for Children
- Hard Work
- Knowledge of Family Tree
- Avoidance of Conflict
- Respect for Nature
- Spirituality
- Humor
- Family Roles
- Hunter Success
- Domestic Skills
- Humility
- Responsibility to Tribe

The following questions are part of my original research proposal. However, since I am focusing my written master's project on the informal discussions of the Iñupiat H̄itqusiāt with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers, I have included the questions in the Iñiqpaġmiut Iñupiat Discussion Board/Cultural Atlas.

(<http://ankn.uaf.edu/CulturalAtlases/>)

1. How did you come to be in Fairbanks/Anchorage?

Some Iñupiat living in an urban city have moved from a rural village. Some Iñupiat were born and raised in an urban setting. I can ascertain where the family is originally from within the Iñupiaq region.

2. How long have you or your family lived in Fairbanks/Anchorage?

This information can reveal the timeline for circumstances of the choice to move in an urban setting. Some families have been in a city for generations, while some have moved fairly recently. This question will help me identify Iñupiat who have had lived and experienced living in a rural area. This will also help me identify those who have only experienced living in an urban setting.

3. Why have you stayed/what makes you stay?

Each family has a reason for staying in an urban setting. There may be family commitments and connections. There may be economic or educational reasons for remaining in a city. Each situation is unique and relevant to my research. Some Iñupiat may have chosen to live in an urban setting temporarily, while some plan to continue living in a city. Participants will reveal more information and circumstances as the research is taking place.

4. What Iñupiat activities do your family participate in?

There are various activities available for urban Iñupiat, as well as the general public. For example, the Festival of Native Arts, World Eskimo-Indian Olympics, Alaska Federation of Natives conference, dance groups, etc. Some families may live the subsistence lifestyle even though they live in an urban setting. Some families travel and visit the rural village where their family originated. There may be some who feel that they do not participate in Iñupiat activities.

5. Do you maintain your cultural heritage? If so, how?

This question is more aimed toward the individuals as opposed to families, as in question 4. There may be situations where an Iñupiaq is speaking or learning their Native language. There are artisans and craftspeople practicing Iñupiaq art forms and making regalia. This open-ended question will identify ways of being an Iñupiaq person.

6. What do the Iñupiat values mean to you?

The Iñupiaq region is wide spread. There are rural villages distantly located in the North and Northwest. There are two commonly distributed Iñupiat values publications currently available (ANKN, 2007). There are similarities between the two publications, but each individual has their own interpretation of each Native value.

7. What Iñupiat activities would you like to see more of in your community?

The urban Iñupiat community would benefit from this information, providing an opportunity to share ways of more community involvement. Once participants review my research results, the urban Iñupiat community can decide how to carry forth any improvements for Iñupiaq activities.

8. What does it mean to be Iñupiaq?

I feel that this may be the heart of my research. Besides blood quantum, I will be able to have the urban Iñupiat define what makes a person Iñupiaq. This open-ended question may have varying answers depending on each individual, but it may provide a better understanding about being an Alaska Native person.

9. What kind of Iñupiaq education should be passed down to future cultural bearers?

This information may be critical. Responses may help identify what may be lacking as far as current education for the Iñupiat children. The future of the Iñupiaq cultural heritage depends on the Iñupiat children's education.

Methodology

A Tlingit man shared with me a wonderful analogy about maintaining one's cultural heritage. He said that a cultural heritage is like a forest. You have one single tree, yourself, which needs to be healthy and strong. The surrounding trees are your family members. The whole forest is your community. Each tree needs each other to survive.

I have adapted this Tlingit analogy to my writing style. I share each Iñupiaq value I have learned personally. I write about how my family, both my family that I grew up with and my family that I currently have with my wife, lives each Iñupiaq value. Lastly, I write how the urban Iñupiaq community interprets each Iñupiaq value.

Anonymity is certainly an option for every participant. Informal audio recordings will be made with each participant's consent. Since I am an Iñupiaq individual, I recognize that there is potential that I may not be unbiased in my research. However, the integrity of the data will have academic merit.

One of the issues that I have in documenting the interpretation of the Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt by the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers is addressing each Iñupiaq value. Since I will host informal discussion during practice times, there are some practices that not everyone will be able to attend. There are some practices when only my family and one other person are present. Ideally, I want to have the Iḡitqusiāt discussions when there are enough dance members to provide a diverse perspective. Hence, for my written master's project, I will have to provide an in-depth interpretation of some of our Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt, omitting a few values that we have not had an opportunity to discuss. The complete interpretations of our Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt will be included in the living project, the Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat Discussion Board/Cultural Atlas.

I find that Wilson's methodology may have parallel usefulness for my research proposal. Wilson states, "Participant observers immerse themselves in the lives of the people that they wish to understand." (Wilson, 1996) I am an urban Iñupiaq; therefore I am immersed and have a connectedness with potential research participants.

Brandt explains her methodology using the narrative approach, "...students' identities or 'narratives of location' are linked to physical places whose geography and community are rapidly changing." (Brandt, 2006) This method may prove useful in data collecting and analysis. Coupling the participant-observer methodology with narratives of

location would help make my research more holistic. The urban Iñupiat participating in the research will include families who have recently moved to the city, individuals who were born and raised in the city, and families who live in the city and have adopted an Iñupiaq child.

Smith writes about an interview with a close personal friend during her research (Smith, 1999). When Smith scheduled an interview with her friend, Smith found her house cleaned up, not the same environment and atmosphere as if Smith would visit informally at many occasions. I do not anticipate my interviews to occur similarly, since the situation will occur in a public venue and will be very informal. Rachel Craig, an Iñupiaq Elder, provides a wonderful process for making interviews more comfortable for participants (Craig, 1999).

For culturally responsive research, I will abide by the Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge (AANE, 2000), the Alaska Federation of Native Guidelines for Research (AFN, 1993), Institutional Review Board, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Smith writes, "...researchers have to share their 'control' of research and seek to maximize the participation and the interest of [Indigenous people]" (Smith, 1999). I will share my research with the participants for accuracy and follow cultural protocols before submitting a final project.

Each Iñupiat Iḡitqusiat that we had an opportunity to discuss will be a chapter in my written master's project. Before each chapter is included in my written project, a draft copy is given to each participant to ensure accuracy, giving them an opportunity to exclude or include any details.

Participants will have an opportunity to contribute in the research in other ways besides interviews. A discussion board will be established as a method of support and collaboration. Urban Iñupiat will be provided with a password-protected online genealogical program with the capability to include Iñupiaq names and kinship terms. An Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat Discussion Board/Cultural Atlas has been developed with the prospect of providing a living avenue of defining the urban Iñupiat.

Ultimately, I will be accountable for the data collection and analysis. However, I feel confident that I will follow our Iñupiaq Elders' directives and leadership so that our whole Iñupiaq community will benefit from the research. Rachel Craig writes, "Your *ilitqusiq* is motivated by your spirit: happy spirit, sad spirit, fighting spirit, calm spirit." (VNN, 1996)

Iḷismaḷiq Uqapiaḷḡmik - Knowledge of Language

In June 2009, when my family and I were riding a bus in Denali National Park to Kantishna Roadhouse, my youngest son Joseph yelled, “Tuttu!” We had to tell the other passengers on the bus that he saw a caribou. When Joseph sees a caribou, the first thing that comes to his mind is the Iñupiaq word *tuttu*. - *Asiqḷuq*

Uvaṇa atiga Asiqḷuq. My Iñupiaq name is Asiqḷuq. My white fox name is Charles “Sean” Topkok. I am Iñupiaq, Sami, Irish, and Norwegian. My parents are the late Aileen and Clifford Sanguk Topkok from Teller, Alaska. My father was Iñupiaq and Sami, and his first language was Iñupiaq. My mother was born and raised in Teller, learning to speak a little Iñupiaq. I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska. My father told me that we are *Kauweramiut*.

Whenever I introduce myself, I always start off with the Iñupiaq language. Even learning about an Iñupiaq name is a language lesson in itself. The late Rachel Craig writes, “So as names go, Savigummuaq is actually Piquk, like Peggy is Margaret or Bill is William.” (Craig, 1996) My father’s first language was Iñupiaq. However, when I was growing up with my four brothers, he spoke mostly English at home. He did use some Iñupiaq at home. My mother’s first language was English, but she did know quite a bit of Iñupiaq words and phrases from growing up in the village.

Some of the words I heard from my parents were either commands or statements. Sometimes we were told to hurry up, “Qilamik!” When we wanted the dog to get out of the way, we would say, “Ah-da!” (phonetic spelling) I asked my father if there were any cuss words in Iñupiaq. Though there are words like “feces”, which is “anak”, those words were not used in the same context as in an explicative. My father tried to teach us more words and phrases. He handwrote some useful words in a note pad or on scratch paper. He was never taught the orthography, so he had to use phonetic spellings. However, since he did not know how to teach, even his heritage language, and did not speak it with his children, my brothers and I were not able to become fluent speakers.

One of the reasons my father may not have spoken it at home may be due to the fact that he wasn’t allowed to speak Iñupiaq in his school. In the publication *Iñupiat*

*Iñitqusi*at, Chris Tickett observes, “In the early 1900’s, the missionaries said Eskimos had to go to school and learn English. They weren’t allowed to talk in their language or they would get a spanking with a big paddle. If they did something wrong in school or hurt someone they would have to work for the Elders.” (VNN, 1996) Kaplan provides additional information about the discouragement of speaking Iñupiaq, “At the same time, school and government personnel told parents to speak English to the children at home, and fearful that their children would suffer punishment, the parents tried, even though many of them spoke very little English themselves.” (Kaplan, 1984)

Another reason that my father may not have spoken Iñupiaq at home may be that English was more visible. Yaayuk writes, “I’ve had conversations with mothers who were unsure about speaking their language to their children, so they just end up speaking in English to them. They shared it is hard, what to do since there is so much English everywhere in the communities now.” (Alvanna-Stimpfle, 2007)

Regardless of the reason for not speaking Iñupiaq at home, the outcome resulted in less fluent speakers. In just one Iñupiaq region, the statistics show an alarming situation. Aqqaluk Trust writes, “In 2005 the Aqqaluk Trust and the Native Village of Kotzebue conducted a survey showing that only 14 percent of the regions residents understand Inupiaq fluently, with 92% of fluent speakers over the age of 65.” (AT, 2008) This statement is not isolated and is similar to other Iñupiaq villages and communities. In 1986, MacLean states, “There are approximately 70,000 speakers of the Inuit language (45,000 in Greenland, 20,000 in Canada, and 5000 in Alaska).” (MacLean, 1986) In the last two decades, the number of fluent speakers have declined.

According to Maclean, “Alaskan Iñupiaq has four major dialects: North Slope, Malimuit, Qawiaraq and Bering Strait.” (MacLean, 1980) The dialect “Qawiaraq” is MacLean’s spelling for Kauwerak, which is Oquilluk’s spelling. Since Oquilluk is from my parents’ home village, I prefer to use the orthography and spelling that we use, though I also use the spelling that was taught to me in college. In my adulthood, I took a semester of Iñupiaq in college. James Nageak taught the course, and he spoke the North Slope dialect.

I work at the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Several years ago, an Iñupiaq woman wanted to share her research

about her community. I was able to help her put her research online. Her original research included Iñupiaq words and spelling from her grandparents. She then went to the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) for their review. An instructor at ANLC provided spelling suggestions for her research. I suggested to her that she offer the spelling from both resources, since her grandparents taught her their local orthography of their own language. Currently, both forms of spelling are available on her research.

As I said before, there are many dialects of Iñupiaq. I grew up with the *Kauweramiut* dialect. In college, my instructor taught the North Slope dialect. When my father said, “Gong-you!” (phonetic spelling), he was saying, “I’m hungry.” The North Slope dialect would be “Kaaktuḡa!” I remember saying, “Gong-you!” when I was walking with the late Rachel Craig, an Elder from Kotzebue. She said that she understood, even though it is a different dialect than what she spoke. Another example is that my father taught us that “Ka-nome-me” (phonetic spelling) means, “I don’t know.” The North Slope and Kobuk dialects would be, “Atchuu.”

Several bilingual books were developed in the different dialects of Iñupiaq. In the late '80s and early '90s, the Northwest Arctic Borough School district published a series of books entitled, *Lore of the Iñupiat*. The books were recordings from Elders’ conferences, transcribed and translated from Iñupiaq. On one side of the book is the English translation and on the other side is the original Iñupiaq.

I have a dance group called the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. During practices, we talk about our *Iñupiat Ḥitqusiāt*, Iñupiaq values. One family in our dance group recalls hearing Iñupiaq spoken by their mother. They heard the common words and a lot of exclamations like, “Alappaa!” (It’s cold!) and “Arigaa” (no translation). But like many adult Iñupiat, they state that their parent or parents didn’t speak Iñupiaq phrases with the children, but rather spoke to other parents when they visited. Also, the members of the dance group had parents from different Iñupiaq villages. Since the parents had dialectal differences, many times they reverted to the only common language being spoken, English.

It’s important to learn the language from a Native speaker. With computers and audiotape programs, you have the luxury of being able to repeat a word or phrases as many times as necessary without frustrating a speaker. However, with a Native speaker,

you get the expertise and cultural knowledge from the instructor. You can easily be mispronouncing a word or phrase, which takes on a whole new meaning. For example, if you want to answer, “I’m fine,” the proper phrase is “Nakuuruḡa.” If you say “Nakuruḡa,” which sounds very similar, you are replying, “I’m cross-eyed.”

One of our dance members used to learn some Iñupiaq words from when some bible verses were translated into Iñupiaq. He remembers some songs were sung in Iñupiaq. In the 1970s, there was a book published with the phonetic Iñupiaq spelling of the books of Matthew and Mark called, “Ku li ak tua loa tak ku li aḡ ra nun.”

Another dance member shared about learning from her grandmother. “She spoke to me in Iñupiaq 80% out of the time to ensure I understood...The only reason I understand a lot of it is because of my grandmother.” Her parents and their siblings spoke Iñupiaq, but spoke English at home.

In the *Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages*, under the section for Aspiring Language Learners, it states, “Be persistent in the practice of the heritage language, even when embarrassed to speak in the presence of fluent speakers.” Under the section for Parents, it states, “Be an active and full participant in all aspects of a child’s upbringing, including joint learning of the heritage language (if not already a fluent speaker) as a way of demonstrating the importance of the effort.” (AANE, 2001) I feel that for me and my family, we are learning and practicing our heritage languages at home, slowly but surely.

My sons identify with their grandparents based on different languages. For my parents, they would refer to them as “Grandma” and “Grandpa.” To differentiate between their grandparents, they referred to my wife’s parents as “Ahna” and “Ataata.” There are some words that my sons know only in Iñupiaq, there are also some words that they know only in Norwegian.

A dance members states that one of our Iñupiaq values is not only “Knowledge of Language,” but also “Knowledge of Languages.” She states that knowing another language may make it easier to understand other languages. My family not only speaks English and Iñupiaq at home, we also speak Norwegian. Norwegian is also part of our sons’ cultural heritage. Being able to speak another language may make it easier for children to pick up other languages, including their own Native language.

Several years ago, I acquired a CD produced by the North Slope Borough School District. The CD had five interactive stories all in Iñupiaq. One of the stories has five polar bears on the ice. A sequence would have a polar bear diving into the water to hunt, and then the student would have to count the number of polar bears left in Iñupiaq. I let one of my sons play with this CD many times. There was a point in his young life that he got frustrated with another CD game and wanted to throw all of his CDs away – all of them except for the Iñupiaq one.

When my wife was in middle school about 25 years ago, her final for her Iñupiaq language class was to say only ten words in Iñupiaq. A dance member stated that it was required of students to pass the Iñupiaq class or they couldn't graduate, but currently is not required. However, the opportunities for teaching Iñupiaq to our children are available. In Kotzebue, there is a preschool called the Nikaitchuat Iḷisagvik. When the students cross the door of the school, only Iñupiaq is spoken. The students “will be gently encouraged to move into speaking Inupiaq as their competence and confidence grows.” (Kotzebue IRA, 2009)

One of the newest resources for learning Iñupiaq is from the Rosetta-Stone company. This was done in collaboration with the language experts in Kotzebue. There are other resources available that have been around for a while. Alaskool has a searchable Iñupiaq dictionary online, along with an Iñupiaq Phrasebook. ANLC has stories recalled by Iñupiaq people which were produced in the 1970s and are available online. ANKN, and the partnership with ANLC, is putting the 1979 Kobuk Junior Dictionary online and making it searchable.

In 1999, there was a group of computer technicians meeting with various Native language and education specialists for two or three days in Fairbanks. The meeting was called Computer Assisted Translation for Alaska Native Languages. The objective of the meeting was to introduce the idea of having a computer application to translate from English to an Alaska Native Language. This type of translation service would be similar to Altavista's (now Yahoo's) Babel Fish (<http://babelfish.yahoo.com/>). However, the accuracy even from English to French back to English was very low. From what I've heard, all Alaska Native languages are very complex. I have not seen any follow-up on the meeting.

There are several initiatives around Alaska dealing with revitalization of Native languages. In Kodiak, the Alutiiq Museum sponsors several language meetings, bringing Alutiiq Elders and language experts together to discuss and initiate directives in teaching the Alutiiq language. In June 2008, I attended a meeting, listening to a room full of Alutiiq Elders speaking only in Alutiiq. This group works with an Alutiiq graduate student, who is also employed with the Alutiiq Museum, creating new words for contemporary situations. They are working on words like computer, television, etc. This type of research is also going on with other Native languages in Alaska.

What I've heard from others wanting to speak their Native language is the thirst to hear the language spoken. In the Seminar for Cross-Cultural Studies class, a student shared that speaking with an Athabascan Elder was, "Just speak it!" She said that understanding of the language will come later, just listening to the language is necessary now.

In order for our heritage language to continue, we must use it in everyday situations. I would like to close this section with a short story. When my wife and I started dating many years ago, I heard her say, "A-dii!" several times. There are many translations for it, but it's used as an exclamation. I worked at a high school in Anchorage for a year, in a school-within-a-school program. Apparently I was using "A-dii!" so often that one of my students starting using the term, too.

Iḷismaliq Iḷagiiḷigmik – Knowledge of Family Tree

As prospective parents of the new namesake in the family, we also got a glimpse of the depth of feeling that our grandparents had for those early forebears and what some of our ancestors' characteristic traits were. This lesson in our ongoing genealogy brought the generations closer together. It gave our generations thoughts and glimpses of our forebears that we knew nothing about. It gave our informers the opportunity to remember their relatives that they had not thought about in a long time, plus giving them a time for a "teaching moment" to the next generation.

- Rachel Craig, Iñupiaq Elder (Craig, 1996)

Uvaṇa atiga Asiḷuq. My Iñupiaq name is Asiḷuq. My white fox name is Charles “Sean” Topkok. I am Iñupiaq, Sami, Irish, and Norwegian. My parents are the late Aileen and Clifford Topkok from Teller, Alaska. My father was Iñupiaq and Sami, and his first language was Iñupiaq. My mother was born and raised in Teller, learning to speak a little Iñupiaq. My paternal grandparents were Fred and Gussie Topkok. My maternal grandparents were Edgar and Mary Tweet who were Norwegian and Irish respectively. I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska along with my four brothers. My father told me that we are *Kauweramiut*.

Many Indigenous people that I have met introduce themselves stating their family lineage. This salutation not only provides information about the individual, but it also demonstrates a way of honoring our ancestors. One of our *Iñupiat H̄itqusiāt*, the “Iñupiaq¹ Values” established by our Elders, is *Iḷismaliq Iḷagiiḷigmik*, meaning “Knowledge of Family Tree.” Knowing who you are and who your ancestors are is essential for cultivating Native well-being. It is equally important to pass this knowledge to our future cultural bearers.

When I was young, I asked my father how to spell my name. Since Iñupiaq was traditionally an oral language, he gave me a phonetic spelling, “A-seek-a-luke”. After taking an Iñupiaq Language class in college, I have adopted the North Slope Iñupiaq way of spelling my name. My parents told me that Asiḷuq means, “Bad Boy”.

I am named after one of my great-uncles, Asiḷuq Johnny Kakaruk. An Iñupiaq Elder would know my family tree just by my Iñupiaq name. Johnny was a reindeer herder

¹ “Iñupiaq” is singular and “Iñupiat” is plural.

in Teller and Old Mary's Igloo (Atchaga Sadie Kakaruk, personal communication). I did not have the pleasure of meeting my namesake. I am the leader of an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks, Alaska, the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers. In the book *People of Kauwerak*, Laurel Bland contributed the foreword sharing a glimpse of William Oquilluk's life. She writes that Johnny was also a drummer and singer (Oquilluk, 1973). It is believed that the *ilitqusiḡ*, or spirit, traits are also passed on with the name.

When I was born, my parents did not include my Iñupiaq name on my birth certificate. My Auk² (grandmother) Gussie Topkok had given my name to me after I was born. My wife Amelia "Amy" Katherine (Barr) Topkok and I decided to include our children's Iñupiaq names in their birth certificates. We named our sons' after relatives who have recently passed away. My wife's Iñupiaq name is Ahnaughuk which means, "Little Girl". So Little Girl is married to Bad Boy. We had to ask our parents to see if we are related before we started dating each other. It's one important reason to know your family tree.

In the *Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally Healthy Youth*, parents are encouraged to, "Use traditional naming practices and help each child understand the significance of the names they carry." (AANE, 2001) With the Iñupiat, our family tree is embedded in our names.

My first son is Christopher Schroeder Akukqasuḡ Topkok. My father was Clifford Sanguk Topkok. When my twin brother and I were born, my father wanted to name us: Clifford S. Topkok II and Clifford S. Topkok III. My mother compromised by giving us his initials. She also wanted us to grow up unique, so she called us by our middle names. I have passed this tradition to my first son and gave him my initials. Akukqasuḡ is from his great-uncle Kenneth Mills from Noatak, Alaska who is a relative of my wife, her mother's immediate uncle.

My second son is Aaron Kenneth Masuḡnaat Saanjiaḡ Topkok. It is not uncommon for people to have more than one Iñupiaq name. Saanjiaḡ was Angie Nageak's Iñupiaq name and Masuḡnaat was Aaron's great-aunt Christine Obruk's Iñupiaq name. Christine, from Shishmaref, Alaska, died of cancer right before Aaron was born. Iñupiaq

² The Iñupiaq word for "mother or grandmother" is Aaka. My paternal grandmother preferred to spell her name "Auk".

names do not take gender. (Craig, 1996) Angie was not a blood relative; however, her father, James Nageak, was my Iñupiaq language instructor in college. When I shared with him that my wife was pregnant with Aaron, he requested that we give him Angie's Iñupiaq name. Because of our respect for James, we honored his request and fully supported naming him Saanjiaq. Aaron has had two sets of parents with his birth parents and, when James and Anna Nageak are in town, another set with his namesake parents, who always ask how he is doing. He also has the initials "AKT", the same as my wife's initials – making a new family tradition.

My third son is Joseph Bjørn Aqituaq Topkok. Aqituaq was my twin brother's Iñupiaq name and means "No Name". Scott died about a year before Joseph was born, and I wanted to keep his *ilitqusiḡ* alive by giving his name to my son. Bjørn is Norwegian for "bear". My parents told me that one of my great-grandmothers was an *aḡatquḡ*, or shaman. She was supposed to be able to change into a bear, and she was a good *aḡatquḡ*. Bjørn will not only understand the significance of his name but also remember his Norwegian heritage through this special process.

My last name is Topkok. My Atchaga (Aunt) Clara Topkok pronounces it *Tapqaq* (using the North Slope Iñupiaq spelling). *Tapqaq* means "peninsula or sand spit". When the missionaries were recording names in written form, they did not have an orthography to go by. Hence, Tapqaq sounded like Topkok to the missionaries. According to Webster and Zibell, Shishmaref was traditionally called Tapqaq. (Webster and Zibell, 1970) Ironically, this is where my wife's paternal grandfather Gideon Barr and grandmother Katherine Barr are from. The residents of Shishmaref say the traditional name is *Kigiktaq*. There is also a hill named Topkok east of Nome, Alaska. There used to be an Iñupiaq village in 1880 there with a population of 15. (Thurman, 1971) My father told me that my great-grandfather was racing someone on a dogsled. He took a shortcut on the hill even though it was a dangerous path and won the race safely. Hence, the hill was named after him. There are some Iditarod dog mushers who talk about Topkok Hill in news reports.

My ancestors have elected to keep our Iñupiaq surname. Before Western contact, the Iñupiat only needed one name. When missionaries arrived and started baptizing the Iñupiat, the concept of having a surname was introduced. I've been told by my Elders

that the price for a baptism was a white fox pelt. After an individual was baptized, they were given a Christian name by the missionaries: a white fox name. Depending on the missionary, some Iñupiat were named after famous people like Truman Cleveland. One family had a “John Adams”, a “Johnny Adams”, and a “Jon Adams”.

All three of my sons are able to introduce themselves in Iñupiaq. They also use Iñupiaq kinship terms with their grandparents. They know their grandparents as “Ahna” (grandmother) and “Ataata” (grandfather). When we have our children greet Iñupiaq Elders, we have them call them “Ahna” or “Ataata”, even though they may or may not be blood relatives, so as to establish their respect for their elders.

In our Iñupiaq language, we have specific kinship terms for each of our relatives. For example, in English we may use the term “aunt” for the sister of either parent. In Iñupiaq, the word for “my mother’s sister” is *ayaḡruksaaga* and the word for “my father’s sister” is *atchaga*. The Iñupiat still use these terms today. English kinship terms for Iñupiaq relatives are more formal than English terms for English relatives. For example, my sons would call my first cousin who is older than me “Uncle”, even though technically they would be second cousins.

Our Iñupiaq Elders encourage us to know who our relatives are, including those in other villages. If we ever need any help when we are traveling, we know whom we can turn to. The late Rachel Craig, an Iñupiaq Elder from Kotzebue, Alaska, shared at a meeting that one of the reasons the Iñupiat traditionally traded spouses was to build family ties between the villages (Personal communication). They were thinking of their children, establishing future relations so that their offspring could travel safely to other villages.

In the book of Genesis in the Bible, Adam and Eve are the ultimate parents. In *People of the Kauwerak*, William Oquilluk writes oral history of the Kauweramiut. Before the disasters, Iñupiat lived off the land, roaming naked since it was so warm. People lived for many generations, sometimes five generations (Oquilluk, 1973). This oral history must also be included in our *Iḷismaliq Iḷagiiḷḡmik*.

Oral history provides a rich resource for family tree research. Western scientists and Indigenous people are working together to document traditional knowledge. In the book *Ublasuan*, Susan Fair writes, “As told by Gideon Barr, Sr. [my wife’s paternal

grandfather], however, the tale of a legendary strongman thought to have been related to the Barr family far back in time. The actual genealogy can no longer be traced.” (NPS, 2004) *Ublasaun* includes rich genealogy and photographs of Amy’s family tree. The strongman Ilaganiq oral tradition had been passed down from generation to generation and provides a wonderful resource for our children.

Catherine Attla, an Athabascan Elder from Huslia, Alaska, provides a wonderful summation of balancing two worldviews in *Make Prayers to the Raven*, “ ‘You know Pat [the first priest in Huslia], I’m really off balance right now. I’m learning more about church, but I’m carrying my grandfather’s way, or our old people.’ And he say, ‘You have to carry both - you have to carry both. Both of them is right. Those people were given power from God to heal one another.’ Boy, I felt good.” (KUAC-TV, 1987)

Researching one’s family tree provides an excellent opportunity to gain oral history from our Elders. When working with Elders, it’s important to practice patience. Rachel Craig encourages, “Allow the subject of your interview to say all that he/she feels needs to be said about a given subject. The elders are not in a hurry to give information, but it is important to them to give accurate information as far as they know.” (Craig, 1998) The late Rachel Craig also suggested talking with multiple family members in order to get more accurate records. If an individual is not used to interacting with an Elder, genealogy is a wonderful topic to initiate an intimate conversation. It is seldom that an Elder does not include old stories with family history. With the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks, we talk about the *Iñupiat H̄itqusiāt* during practices. One of our group members shared about doing her own research on her family tree. She discovered that her great-grandfather was an *aṇatquq*, and that her mother’s parents were teachers in the Quaker church.

I have pigmentary glaucoma. I inherited it from my mother. My sons are at-risk of inheriting glaucoma from me. Without the knowledge of family tree, an individual may not be able to understand and prevent their potential family medical ailments. Knowing the causes of death of family members is important to share with our children. I had two brothers die from excessive alcohol abuse. This can be easily preventable. My father committed suicide, taking a permanent solution to a temporary problem. These may be

construed as family secrets, but it helps with family healing to inform our future cultural bearers.

In *Yuuyaraq*, Harold Napoleon writes, “The children of these survivors must also speak. They are now grandparents, even great-grandparents. They must speak of their childhoods, their world, what they saw, what they perceived, what they thought, how they felt. They too must share with us their life stories, leaving nothing out, the good and the bad, because their experiences are ours, and we are their seed. We also love them.” (Napoleon, 1996) In every family, there are family secrets. These family secrets should probably never be shared outside the family. However, in order for a child to fully understand and appreciate their own family, those secrets may need to be revealed. I found out that I had a half-sister Bonnie when I was in my early twenties. My father had a daughter long before he married my mother. This was a family secret not revealed until my adulthood.

When I was living in Anchorage, Alaska, I belonged to a dance group, the Greatland Traditional Dancers. The Yupiaq Elders of the dance group were Marie and the late William Tyson. Mr. and Mrs. Tyson treated me like their son. I have a Tlingit name, Deikeejaakhw, meaning “warrior out in the sea”. I was adopted in the Shark Clan by Carol Trebian and am Wooshkeetan. My adopted Tlingit mother’s house is the *Xóots Hít*, or Brown Bear House. I feel that I have family in many places in Alaska. The late Ruthie Tatqaviñ Sampson writes, “One wish of the Elders is for students to choose the good things of the Western culture and the good things of the Inupiaq culture to live a balanced lifestyle.” (NWABSD, 1992) This also applies to what we can learn from other Indigenous people.

Our extended families include other Indigenous cultures. We need our Indigenous brothers and sisters – to learn from them and to share with them. Recognizing Indigenous people as family is not only encouraged, but it’s also our right. Article 36, Section 1 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states, “Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.” (UNGA, 2007)

I have worked with Alaska Native Knowledge Network since April 1997. I receive inquiries from many individuals attempting to find their cultural connections. Some people have been adopted out, or come from divorced families, or have other situations where they are disconnected from their cultural heritage and family. I generally advise people to bring their birth certificates to their local Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office to acquire a certificate of Indian blood. Some Alaska Native corporations may have avenues to explore family ties.

On one occasion, I received a letter from someone who was incarcerated in the Lower 48 and was not able to physically go to a BIA office, nor was he able to go to Vital Statistics to obtain a birth certificate. He had moved out of state with his father at a young age. He did remember spending time with his grandmother, and supplied the names of his mother and grandmother. I happened to recognize their names, since his late mother was one of my cousins. I contacted her sister, his aunt, and reunited them.

Living in Fairbanks, Alaska, I have come to know many of the urban Iñupiat, or *Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat*. There are some *Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat* who are members of the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers. I have provided an online family tree program for their use. Some members were born and raised in Fairbanks, away from where their families originated. Some members have been adopted out, again away from where their families originated. Giving them the tools to research their own genealogy provides an opportunity for them to reconnect with their families still living in the villages. Also, there is some evidence that some members have discovered family living in Fairbanks.

There are some Pavva members who do not have to look very hard to see their family tree. At one point, we had a family with four generations involved with our dance group. There is another family where there are two brothers and a sister, their two nieces, and a daughter of one of the nieces were all part of the dance group. I consider all of the dance members family.

We must not forget our family who is part of the eco-animus, the “nature-spirit”. Humans and nature are all interconnected. Our sense of who we are is also embedded in where we come from, including our natural surroundings. My parents told me that our family is not supposed to be afraid of bears, because my great-great grandmother was an *aṇatquq*. As I have mentioned before, he said that she was able to change herself into a

bear. In my adulthood, my mother reminded me of the story. I went hiking in the mountains with three friends of mine, between Girdwood and Eagle River. It was a two-day hike, about 26 miles in the springtime. About 14 miles into the hike, we lost the trail, so we started going up the mountain to see if we could find it. I noticed behind me, since I was carrying up the rear, a black bear quietly coming out of some bushes. I let the others become aware of the bear's presence, but the bear did not pay any attention to us. The black bear continued on its way following the trail that we were on just moments before. After waiting to make sure it was gone, we went to where the bear came out only to find the trail that we lost. I feel that it was my great-great grandmother showing us the way.

As I mentioned before, a Tlingit man shared with me a wonderful analogy about maintaining one's cultural heritage. He said that a cultural heritage is like a forest. You have one single tree, yourself, which needs to be healthy and strong. The surrounding trees are your family members. The whole forest is your community. Each tree needs each other to survive. The following poem comes from special newspaper edition called, *Iñupiat Iḡitqusiat: Portrait of a People – By the People*:

The Cycle of Life

Eric Gooden

Kiana

Grade 9

Solid as a tree of Life,
My family stands up firm
The branches and the roots
work together to make our families
strong.

I feel like a tree
blowing in the wind.
My branches are expanding
I am a tree of Kin.

I draw strength from my roots
and grow into a tree of kin.
Soon to sprout new seeds of life
and begin the cycle again.
(VNN, 1996)

I feel that there is now an urgency to teach our youth the skills and knowledge to research their family trees. With the passing of each Elder, a cultural library gets lost. In the Cultural Standards for Students, Section D, it states that students are to, “acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with Elders” (AANE, 1998). Fortunately, and unfortunately at the same time, I was able to gather genealogical information from obituaries, finding names and relations of cousins. One of my older cousins visited with my family in Summer 2008. Since she traveled around, she shared a great deal of our family tree.

There are great resources for students, educators, and parents to use for working with Elders on genealogy:

“What’s in a Name?” by Rachel Craig

<http://ankn.uaf.edu/SOP/SOPv1i5.html#name>

This article provides an in-depth explanation about traditional Iñupiaq naming practices from an Elder and from an Indigenous perspective.

“Family Tree Project” by Rachel Craig

<http://ankn.uaf.edu/NPE/Inupiaq/RachelTree.html>

Rachel shares her passion about her Family Tree Project. She had worked with many Iñupiaq villages, gathering genealogy research. Through her experience, she provides a wonderful framework for others to apply to their locale.

“Family Tree” by Josie Dayton, DeAnn Moore, Jan Cabanis, & Heather Karmun

<http://ankn.uaf.edu/curriculum/units/FamilyTree.html>

In this culturally responsive curriculum unit, the authors (mostly Iñupiaq educators) provide a three-week lesson plan for intermediate elementary grades. Included are content and cultural standards along with detailed lessons.

There are many resources on the internet. It's important to verify whatever online research is done with a family member or cultural bearer for accuracy. There may be a lot of misinformation out there.

Summary

There is the adage, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." At the same time, it takes a whole village to teach a child about their *Iñismaliq Iñagiiñigmik*. The village includes oneself, a family, and the community. The village also includes the eco-animus and the natural surroundings. The village also includes our Indigenous neighbors, statewide and worldwide. We must be proud of who our ancestors and who we are, Native and non-Native.

Uvaņa atiga Asiqłuq. My Iñupiaq name is Asiqłuq. My white fox name is Sean Topkok. I am Iñupiaq, Sami, Irish, and Norwegian.

Kamaksriġiq Utuqqanaanik - Respect for Elders

The knowledge of Indigenous people continues to be utilized in present day activities, whether people have direct contact with Indigenous cultural bearers or live in an urban setting. There is documentation that Elders' knowledge has been more accurate than Western scientific methods. Indigenous people worldwide are collaborating with each other to share their knowledge. Alaska Natives have been actively involved with civil rights movements at an early time frame, compared to the continental U.S. There are currently educational programs integrating Alaska Native knowledge as a primary means of training teachers and educators. Indigenous knowledge is applied and practiced in everyday situations and everyday life.

Western scientists have been researching Indigenous people and their environment for decades. Some Alaska Natives were in awe of some of the new technology that the Western visitors have introduced, like the Global Positioning System. In 1977, the International Whaling Commission ordered an immediate ban on whaling based upon a publication from Western scientists about the count of bowhead whales. (Wohlforth, 2001) The Elders in Barrow knew that the publication was inaccurate. They told the scientists where the bowheads were so that they could get a more precise count. Most scientists were skeptical of their knowledge. It wasn't until 1985 when more accurate methods were applied, with the collaboration with the Elders, that the Indigenous knowledge was proven to be true.

Oral history places an important role in learning knowledge from Indigenous Elders. William Oquilluk was an Iñupiaq who lived in Nome. (Dye, 2000) "Old Willie" was known for his story telling. One of his recollections was a story about when there was a very brief summer and famine due to the community not being able to subsist. The story was shared with a researcher studying tree rings. The evidence from the tree rings show that in 1783 there basically wasn't a summer. Another oral history is about a very powerful *an̄atquq*, shaman, who lived on the coast of Alaska. My approximation is that this situation took place in the 1800s. This powerful *an̄atquq* took caribou away from villages. (NWABSD, 1992 & Jones, 1985) His actions started a war with shamans and medicine men statewide. The *an̄atqut* traveled along the river to collect an army of

shamans to fight this one bad *aṇatquq*. Since this account was documented at separate times, from the Koyukon and Iñupiaq perspectives, the historical significance suggests that it is a valid story. In October 2007, at the Human Dimensions of the Arctic System (HARC) meeting in Washington, D.C., a Western scientist informed the participants about her research on past caribou migration patterns. When asked if data was available from the 1800s, she replied to the audience of Western scientists that the data can only be acquired through oral history from the Alaska Natives.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI) received funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) from 1995 to 2005. AKRSI's activities were to integrate Native ways of knowing and teaching in the K-12 educational areas. The implementation was based highly on the book *A Yupiaq Worldview* by Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley. Angayuqaq's work validating Indigenous knowledge with Western science has helped Indigenous communities worldwide. The results from AKRSI's Final Report to NSF show that integrating Native ways of knowing and teaching made a systemic change in education. (AKRSI, 2006) In the 20 rural school districts in Alaska that implemented the initiatives through AKRSI, test scores from standardized tests have increased dramatically in math and science, while test scores remained the same in the other school districts.

Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) is an outcome of AKRSI. Through ANKN, publications were developed by Alaska Native educator associations, which include Cultural Standards and Guidelines. The Cultural Standards are continuing to be adapted for other Indigenous communities worldwide. I have seen Māori Cultural Standards, Navajo Cultural Standards, Hawaiian Cultural Standards, etc. The work of Alaska Native educators has had an impact on education, for Native and non-Native students.

The Māori people in New Zealand have influenced other Indigenous people by setting a goal for themselves. Their goal in 2002 was, "...over a five-year period, a total of 500 Māori who have either completed a PhD or who are enrolled in a research doctoral programme." (MAI, n.d.) To date, the Māori have accomplished this goal and continue to support more Māori PhD students. Inspired by this initiative, and with the help of one of the Māori organizers, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) has set a goal of 25

Alaska Natives to complete a PhD program. To date, only four Alaska Natives have been granted a PhD degree from UAF. A new interdisciplinary degree program in Indigenous Studies is now in the process of being created, but it has been in development for decades. Through the example of the Māori, the Indigenous Studies PhD program appears to become a reality very soon.

The efforts that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks accomplished for civil rights in the 1960s were outstanding and admirable. But history seems to overshadow the efforts what the Alaska Natives have done in the 1940s with similar regards. There is Elizabeth Peratrovich, a Tlingit woman, who was the main leader in the creation of the Anti-Discrimination Act passed in 1945. Businesses refused to sell a house to her and her husband. In 1941, she wrote to Governor Gruening about the signs displayed in business, “No Natives Allowed”, voicing the inequality of treatment towards Alaska Natives.

There was Alberta Schenck and Jorgy Jorgeson who both are half Iñupiaq. Though I have come to know the story in my adulthood, I was fortunate enough to hear Jorgy tell the accounts first hand in November 2007. Alberta and Jorgy were arrested for sitting in the white-only section in the Nome theater. The day after they were arrested, Alberta hired a lawyer and Governor Gruening got involved and wrote the Alaska Civil Rights Law. This happened in 1944 and Alberta was seventeen at that time. When I was going through my K-12 education in Alaska, these important contributions by Alaska Natives were not taught to me. I feel that their actions should be more recognized and shared at all grade levels in every school in Alaska.

Education programs are training future teachers to experience a learning opportunity from Alaska Native Elders. At UAF, through the Cross-Cultural Studies (CXCS) program, there is a class for future and current teachers to go to a fish camp at Old Minto. (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1999) Elders show the teachers the Athabascan lifestyles in a typical fish camp. In Anchorage, at the Alaska Native Medical Center, there is an opportunity for Tribal Doctors to practice their skills. Indigenous knowledge is being more recognized and validated, as well as being practiced.

In martial arts, a student goes through patterns and self-defense over and over. The repetition trains the mind and muscles for self-discipline. A beginner realizes which muscles are being used at an early stage with the newly found soreness. If a student does

not train on a regular basis, the student may be able to demonstrate the patterns learned, but the efficiency and muscle reactions will most likely be lacking. The same idea can be applied to Indigenous knowledge. Most Alaska Native people not only have obtained Indigenous knowledge from the Elders, but they also practice and use the knowledge in their everyday lives. The motto, “Use it or lose it,” is very relevant. Subsistence activities, tool making, carving, speaking the Native language, singing and dancing, etc., help to define Alaska Native cultures.

Before my father, Cliff Topkok from Teller, passed away in 1992, I was working for a cultural camp for urban children. I had the task of replacing the head of a couple axes. I was able to successfully remove the old heads fairly easily. Afterwards, I struggled to hammer the head onto the handle. My father witnessed my struggle and offered advice for me to hammer the bottom of the handle. Regretfully, I dismissed his advice and continued to hammer on top. After a long time, again, he simply took my hammer and ax, and hit the bottom of the handle. It took him less than a minute to successfully fix the ax. The lesson I learned is to follow the directives from our Elders and cultural bearers from the beginning.

Indigenous songs are important communication tools. It is a way of celebrating and sharing Indigenous styles and similarities. Aknik Paul Green expresses his concern that the new generation will not learn their Native language or songs. (Green, 1959)

I have three sons: thirteen, nine, and three years old. At a meeting for Indigenous PhDs held in Fairbanks in October 2007, a participant stated that she does not see families speaking their Native language or community members dancing traditional Native ways. She continued to state that the lack of involvement in Native activities may contribute to students doing poorly in education. I have started and am an active member of an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks, the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers. My wife and three boys have been active members since it began. Even before the group started, my wife and I taught Eskimo dancing in the Fairbanks school district. I remember when my oldest son was not even one year old when we taught a group of music teachers at an in-service. My sons have grown up listening, singing, and dancing Native music. Though I am not a fluent speaker, we speak a little bit of Iñupiaq at home. I am proud to say that my oldest son scored in the one percentile in the national mathematics test, and my middle son was

chosen as the “Leader of the Pack” in his school for the month of May 2006 and September 2007.

Summary

Indigenous people continue to contribute to contemporary knowledge. With more Indigenous people becoming educated in the Western education, and Western researchers learning more about Indigenous ways of knowing, there is more recognition of the *Utuqqanaat Iļisimmataat*, Elders’ knowledge. It is through the Elders’ directives and involvement that we learn and practice our own epistemologies.

Kamakkutiliq - Respect for Others

Two worldviews views have come together, and that Alaskan history has already been told by other authors. What we have learned and continue to learn from each other is still being evaluated by both Western and Indigenous researchers. I am half Iñupiaq and Sami, and half Irish and Norwegian. I feel that I am a result of the unity of multiple worldviews. One part of me has grown up feeling that I am only a partial person, not knowing where I belong. It wasn't until adulthood and the wonderful guidance of my parents, that I came to understand that I am a whole person. We must look at the traditional, generalized worldviews and follow the adaptations that modern Indigenous people carry forth into the future.

Marriage of Worldviews

There are similar lists of a dichotomy of Western and traditional Indigenous worldviews. (RuralCAP, 1994 and Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1999) Usually the heading looks something like this:

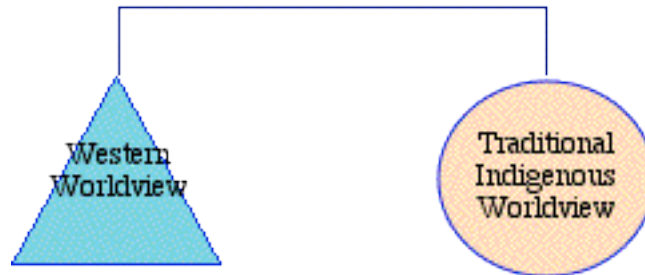
Western
Worldview

Traditional
Indigenous
Worldview

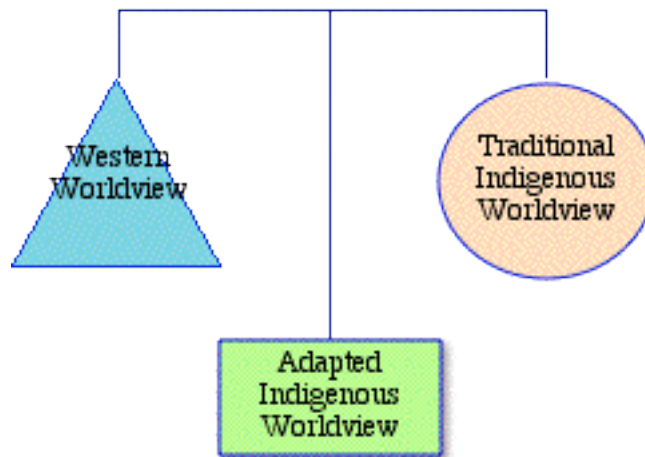
Merculieff suggests that the Western worldview uses male structures and the traditional Indigenous worldview uses female structures. G. Owletuck has noted that the latter is a generalization and incorrect for some Alaska Native cultures. (G. Owletuck, CCS 608 lecture, October 2, 2007) However, for my purposes, I would like to organize the dichotomous heading using genealogical graphics:



The triangle can also represent the linear aspect and the circle can also represent the circular aspect of the respective worldviews. (RuralCAP, 1994 and Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1999) During the first contact between two worldviews, ideas and lessons were shared with one another, resulting in a linkage between the two worldviews:



The result of the marriage between the two worldviews creates an adapted, modern Indigenous worldview. Bielawski suggests that this is a “cross-cultural worldview” (Bielawski, 1990):



I feel that I contain my own adapted, modern Indigenous worldview. Even though I grew up in an urban setting, it does not make me less of a Native. Even though my blood quantum is only partial, it does not make me less than a Native. I have grown up speaking a little Iñupiaq and have eaten Iñupiaq food. I belong to an Iñupiaq dance group and have performed for Elders and received their blessing. I believe that I am teaching my children the *Iñupiat Iḡtqusiāt*, the Iñupiat Values. Through the marriage, there may be an adapted Western worldview sensitive to an Indigenous perspective, too. I would like to recognize that the two worldviews have sometimes had negative situations. The following are two personal examples in my life where the two worldviews clashed.

Situation I

My father, who was Iñupiaq from Teller, Alaska, told me that our family is not supposed to be afraid of bears, because my great-great grandmother was an *aṇatquq*, or shaman. He said that she was able to change herself into a bear and that she was a good *aṇatquq*. In my adulthood, I was reminded of the story by my mother, who is non-Native. I went hiking in the mountains with three friends of mine, between Girdwood and Eagle River. It was a two-day hike, about 26 miles in the springtime. About 14 miles into the hike, we lost the trail, so we started going up the mountain to see if we could find it. I noticed behind me, since I was carrying up the rear, a black bear quietly coming out of some bushes. I let the others become aware of the bear's presence, but the bear did not pay any attention to us. The black bear continued on its way following the trail that we were on just moments before. After waiting to make sure it was gone, we went to where the bear came out only to find the trail that we lost. I feel that it was my great-great grandmother showing us the way.

When I first came aboard the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative in 1997, I went to a statewide meeting in Sitka. Travelers were staying at the Sheldon Jackson College dorms for lodging, sharing a room with other travelers. I roomed with a non-Native who was also a respected rural educator. He initiated a discussion about shamans, asking my opinion about them. I shared the story about my ancestor. He told me his perspective on shamans, what he felt was a first hand experience. He married a Native woman who was supposed to be married to a shaman by arrangement. He continued by saying that the shaman then did something to give the rural educator and his wife bad luck, terrible nightmares, etc. He said that he turned to Christianity to discontinue whatever the shaman did. His conclusion was that all shamans are evil and that there are no "good" shamans. He was very adamant about his view.

The dichotomy is not Christianity versus traditional Native practices. I acknowledge that there are some bad *aṇatquq*, but there are also some good *aṇatquq*. Shamans are like individuals. I feel that it would be a generalization to say that all shamans are bad.

Situation II

For several years, I got these excruciating headaches, but they usually didn't last for very long. However in 1999, my headaches became more frequent. They lasted for about five minutes, subsided and returned again about five minutes later. The severity of the headaches became worse as time progressed. There were times that I would have to curl up on the floor, and I would get somewhere from 40-60 attacks a day.

I went to the clinic and the emergency room when I had severe attacks. I have tried all kinds of medication. First the doctors would put me on caffeine pills. I tried oxygen, injections, and other various pills. I also had an MRI, similar to a cat scan, which did not reveal anything except a white spot that is normal for people older than me. Eventually, I was referred to a neurologist who gave me caffeine pills and pills meant to prevent seizures. All of the medicines did not work for me.

During a meeting in Galena with educators, Elders, and community members, I spoke with an Athabascan Elder Catherine Attla. I spoke with her about traditional medicine, actually asking about remedies for stomach pains for a friend of mine. She suggested that my friend try spruce tea. She showed me how to find the right spruce, how to make the tea, and how to preserve it. When I got home, I prepared some spruce water, but I decided to try it out on myself, just to see how it tasted. Catherine also explained to me the spruce water is good for every day use to clean out your system. After only a couple of days of drinking spruce water, my headaches virtually went away. It was amazing! After about a year trying unsuccessfully various Western medications, it was traditional medicine that worked the best.

During a follow-up appointment with my neurologist, I explained that the medication that he gave me didn't work, and I started drinking spruce water. His response was a condescending chuckle. He said to go ahead and drink the spruce water if I think it makes me feel better, but it doesn't have any medicinal value. He continued to stress that I continue to take the medication he prescribed, thinking that it attributed to my "cure". However, I had stopped my medication long before I tried the spruce water.

I feel that the neurologist was attempting to treat the symptoms, not find the root or cause of my ailment. However, not all Western doctors dismiss the validity of Indigenous medicine.

Affects of Adapted Indigenous Worldviews

There have been positive and negative affects from the integration of the two worldviews. Rev. David Salmon, an Athabascan Elder, compares the traditional killers of his people (ANKN, 2007):

- traditional - starvation, cold weather, and tribal war
- nowadays - alcohol, drugs, and suicide

Kawagley describes the ruptures of “self” due to the influences of Western contact. (Kawagley, 1997) I feel that my *ilitqusiḡ*, or spirit is as complex as a fish net. A fish net is something that is used by most Alaska Native cultures. The negative Western influences are like breaking lines made of sinew in the net. To make ourselves whole, some of us have used Western technology, plastic fish lines, to mend ourselves. We need to constantly mend our nets in order to catch life and not let anything pass through. We must use what is available to us, but remember the techniques on how to properly take care of our *ilitqusiḡ*.

I really admire the "survivors", the Elders and my ancestors. They not only survived the past epidemics that invaded their communities, they survived the Western influences and maintaining their identity and culture. I feel that their motivation for survival was not a personal endeavor, but a cultural endeavor. When I listen to Elders, I hear a concern for our cultural survival when they speak. I feel that they have truly suffered for me and for future generations, so we have a responsibility to live a positive life for all our people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. We also have the responsibility to understand the traditional Indigenous worldview, as well as the traditional Western worldview.

Catherine Attla, an Athabascan Elder, provides a wonderful summation of balancing two worldviews in *Make Prayers to the Raven*, “ ‘You know Pat [the first priest in Huslia], I’m really off balance right now. I’m learning more about church, but I’m carrying my grandfather’s way, or our old people.’ And he say, ‘You have to carry both - you have to carry both. Both of them is right. Those people were given power from God to heal one another.’ Boy, I felt good.” (KUAC-TV, 1987)

Summary

I believe that the adapted, modern Indigenous worldview is as individualistic as there are different types of nets. We are not a homogenous society, nor are we an assimilated one. Each of us has a portion of a traditional Indigenous worldview, meaning that no one individual can represent one culture. It takes all of our people to remain a culture, retaining our own traditional worldview view. We continue to learn from each other, so we must continue to respect others and what they have to offer to mend our nets.

Savvaqtuliq – Hard Work

My father was an ivory carver. I remember when I was about five or six years old, my father told my four brothers and I that whoever wakes up first and helps work on his ivory carvings, he would pay 25 cents. We would help sand his carvings to make them smooth. We had quite a bit of chores to do in the household. My mother had a vegetable garden in our backyard. Whenever we boys fought, we had to weed the garden for five minutes. She had a beautiful and productive garden.

Our ancestors had a very hard life. They were nomadic, following the food during migration. They packed everything with them, leaving nothing behind. They had to collect enough berries and greens to last throughout the winter. They had to cut and haul ice in the winter for drinking water. Our Iñupiaq Elders have included *Savvaqtuliq*, Hard Work, as part of our *Iñupiat Ħitqusiāt*, Iñupiat Values.

An Inuit Elder states, “It was only because my mother and father went through many hardships that we survived. They only survived because they followed the *maligait* [laws] of the Inuit. If they hadn’t followed the *maligait* our lives would have been more difficult.” (Aupilaarjuk, Tulimaaq, Joamie, Imaruittuq, & Nutaraaluk, 1999, p.4)

There are villages that still haul ice for drinking water, and collect enough wood for the winter. Fortunately, they are able to utilize modern technology, such as snowmachines, to make life much easier. We continue to live a subsistence lifestyle, collecting berries and greens. Modern stores have made it less of a life-threatening situation if we were not able to gather enough food, but it’s still necessary to hunt and gather from the land.

I have a dance group called the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. During practices, we talk about our *Iñupiat Ħitqusiāt*. One dance member stated, “They [his parents] didn’t have electricity or running water.” (personal communication) He continued, “Dad said that when he was young, the old people worked even harder than he did. They didn’t have snowmachines...They’d feed their dogs. And to go places, they’d have to hook up the dog team.”

Raelene Black, an eighth grade student from Noorvik, writes for the *Iñupiat Iñitqusi* publication, “Hard work is risking your life for someone, having a job, watching kids, making new friends, earning new things, waiting for the right person, cooking, cleaning, scaling fish, fixing a vehicle or finding a new home. Hard work is teaching babies to walk, talk and write. Hard work takes time!” (VNN, 1996) Hard work does take time. My sons dance with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers. There have been several times after a performance when parents would ask about our practice schedule. We invite anyone to join our dance group. The parents would bring their child to practice, but only participate a couple of times. It takes years to accomplish what my sons are continuing to practice.

Hollowell (2004) writes, “In 1972, the Alaska Department of Economic Development began to distribute the Silver Hand emblem.” (p. 72) The Silver Hand program was available for Alaska Native artisans to authenticate their artwork as being made from an Alaska Native. I remember my father participated in the Silver Hand program in the early 1970s. He was upset that jade and elephant ivory carvings made overseas were being sold in Alaska. He wanted his customers to know that his carvings were hand made by an Iñupiaq person.

There was a point in my childhood that my mother was raising her five sons on her own. Not only did we brothers have chores to do around the house, but also we decided to enter into the work force in order to help with the mortgage and bills. I remember having a newspaper route when I was in junior high school, delivering 200 papers every morning. When I was a teenager, I worked at a fast food place in order to save enough money to pay for my saxophone and first car. I became an assistant manager at the age of 16, which wasn't supposed to be legal until I was 18. I feel that I learned to work hard out of necessity for my family and gained good work ethic in the process.

The necessity to work for ones family is fairly common with the urban Iñupiat. One dance member shares, “We grew up working-we had a store, it was called the Twelve Mile Swap Shop. Even though we were little kids, we would sometimes have to do things to work in the store.” (personal communication) She continues, “I think it instilled in us a very good work ethic. So we might have complained about it when we were little. But I think it gave us a good work ethic for when we were grown up.”

Another dance member recalls, “I remember Mom had the youngest baby. My sisters and I would do laundry. I thought, ‘Wow! She had to do a lot of stuff.’ And I was complaining about how to do one-third of it with my sisters.”

The urban Iñupiat continue to participate in subsistence activities. A dance member shares how she learned hard work from her family, “We got to play, sometimes. But we had to make sure we picked our share of berries or whatever we were doing. You know, go pick firewood for the campfire, help set up the tents, and what not.” Another dance member recalls learning through subsistence, “In addition to picking berries, she showed us the *masru* (Eskimo potato) plants to pick.”

The Elders encourage us to learn Western education, as well as our cultural heritage. A dance member talks about how she learned hard work from Western education, “It was more academics. And so, I was able to work towards trips, you know. Writing the good essays, so I can get on a trip. And it started even in ninth grade. So part of high school was just being able to get those grades. As long as I got those grades, my dad was happy.”

Personally, I am currently a graduate student, furthering my Western education as the Elders continue to encourage. I also work full-time for the Alaska Native Knowledge Network at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. As the leader of a dance group, I work hard to set up practices and performances, communicating with the dance members, filing necessary paperwork to maintain our non-profit status, and much more.

Raising children is hard work. I have three sons. I want to encourage and participate in whatever activities they are involved with, including our dance group. Two of my sons are involved with music, so we parents keep up with their schedules. We help them with their homework. My two older sons were involved with Tae Kwon Do, and my oldest son received his black belt. There are members in our dance group who have children in team sport activities like hockey and soccer. It is hard work to raise children, and it encourages our future cultural bearers to work hard for themselves.

The urban Iñupiat recognize that village life is hard work. Many of the Iñupiat continue to have strong connections with the villages where they or their parents were raised. A dance member states, “They do so much out of respect for other people. Like digging the grave. All the young men in the village volunteer to go dig this frozen ground

eight feet deep....All year round, people help Elders out in the village doing everyday stuff. Nobody tells them they have to do this for Elders. They go and help them just out of respect.” The Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers continues to help others, whether they are part of the dance group, Elders, or other people in need.

Our Iñupiat ancestors have passed our stories down for generations, for thousands of years. There are so many stories that are part of our culture. We, as Iñupiat people, have a responsibility to our tribe to continue to pass these stories to our children, so that they can have the same validity of Mother Goose and Brothers Grimm stories. Personally, I did not grow up listening to our stories. It wasn’t until adulthood that I was able to seek out and purchase books, or seek Elders to listen to. I want my children to grow up listening to our stories and learn more about who they are and where our ancestors come from. I want to let my sons know that they are Iñupiat, no matter where they live. They should be proud of all of their mixed heritages. Passing our oral tradition down to our Iñupiat children is one way of honoring our ancestors.

I have seen personal and cultural growth in members of our dance group. Members are able to present the difference between Iñupiaq and Yup’ik styles of dance and drumming. They can explain the meanings behind the *sayuun* dances. Some members can even identify where the dances originate just by listening to the songs. There are some members who used to be extremely shy, not being able to dance in front of people or even say their own name. I have seen all the youth involved with Pavva, including my three sons, express pride about their cultural heritage through dance and interaction with the audience. At one time, we had over 20 people dancing at a performance.

Pavva is a fairly young dance group, compared to some of the dance groups who have been around for generations. Hence, some of our dance group members were hesitant to perform when other Iñupiaq dance groups were participating. However, I believe that we have received cultural validation, particularly at two separate events. In 2007, Pavva performed for the Alaska Federation of Natives Elders’ reception at the University of Alaska Museum. All of the Iñupiaq Elders expressed gratitude that there is an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks for the Iñupiat living here. One Elder said, “Keep it up!” In 2009, Pavva performed at WEIO for the first time. Other Iñupiaq dance groups

said to Pavva, “The more...the merrier.” They were stating that they were glad that there is an Iñupiaq dance group available in Fairbanks.

All of the hard work belongs to us and to our children, whether it is artwork, stories, experiences, etc. There is a threat that others want to take what we have worked for and call it their own. For example, an author talked to me about writing the late Herbie Nayopuk’s story. She said that she offered to pay his family for his story. I suggested to her to think about having a percentage of the royalties go towards the relocation of the village. She dismissed it quickly stating that she writes for a living. She wants to interview my wife, Amy, for her book, since she has relatives in Shishmaref, but Amy is very hesitant due to her actions.

The hard work provides a learning experience for our future cultural bearers. Clinton Ignitchiaq Swan shares, “I learned these things by watching my grandfather and uncle. I may not have learned everything they knew how to do, but I learned a lot of the traditional things. So, you see, you can learn a lot from knowledgeable people if you are very observant. Later on, when you need to, you will be able to do those things well yourself. Your descendents, in turn, will watch you and learn and remember how to do those things.” (Northwest Alaska Elders, 1990, p.55)

Our Iñupiaq Elders have included *Savvaqtuliq*, Hard Work, as part of our *Iñupiat Iñitqusi*. Our ancestors had a much harder life than we do today. My generation has had a harder life than our children have. But we continue to instill *Savvaqtuliq* as one of our cultural values, so that our children can maintain their cultural heritage.

Kamaksriḡiq Irrutchikun - Respect for Nature

Nature has been here before the introduction of humans. The era of dinosaurs has come and gone. Most of the present residents of Earth have appeared after the extinction of the dinosaurs. Birds, mammals, and human are among some of the newcomers. Humans are a part of nature, and in order to further survive we must respect nature.

Kawagley talks about the ecosystem, ecology, and eco-psychology when he describes the balance between human and nature. Alaska Natives “believe all plants, winds, mountains, rivers, lakes, and creatures of the earth possess a spirit, and therefore have consciousness and life.” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1999) “If all elements of the natural world possess a spirit/soul, then all possess consciousness and the power that it gives to its physical counterpart.” (Kawagley, 1999) I would like to introduce the concept of the eco-animus, the “nature spirit”.

Eco-animus

In the mid 1990s, I started to get cluster migraine headaches. This type of cluster migraine would suddenly come on, lasting several minutes, and then they would subside almost as soon as they appeared. When these first came about, the “attacks” wouldn’t last for very long and only affected me a couple of times a day. The frequency of the attacks was sometimes absent months at a time. The intensity of the migraines was fairly manageable, allowing me to continue with my daily activities with minimal interruption.

They progressively got worse through the years. The attacks would still come suddenly, and they would still last only several minutes. However, the frequency and intensity had become worse. The attacks started coming from a few to several times a day. Usually they repeated: there would be an attack, several minutes of subsidence, and then they would return again. They started affecting me more and more and, eventually, I was on the floor in a fetal position. There was a point when I would get about 40-60 attacks a day.

I had tried to change my diet to determine if this was the cause of the migraines. I stopped drinking coffee, tried a vegan diet, and drank gallons of water daily. I’ve tried drinking more coffee, eating mostly meat and fish, and still drinking lots of water. My

friends and family suggested that perhaps it was a seasonal influence or that sunlight affected me, but I would get attacks throughout the year. Another thought was that the lack of humidity was the cause, but I would also get attacks even when I traveled to coastal areas.

I was eventually referred to a local neurologist. I had an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) done with no abnormal results. The possible remedies prescribed to me were caffeine pills, oxygen, Depakote (an anti-seizure medicine), Imitrix shots – not all at the same time, mind you, and they were unsuccessful. These were ‘experiments’ done on me to try to find ways of preventing the attacks. No known cause was determined for my type of cluster migraines.

At an Athabascan Regional meeting in Galena, Alaska, for the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, participants included educators, researchers, and Elders. Catherine Attla, an Athabascan Elder from Huslia, Alaska, presented about traditional medicine and practices for healing. During that meeting, participants would meet informally, but I had never questioned her about any possible remedies for my situation. She did tell me that she drank at least one cup of spruce tea every day to maintain a healthy lifestyle. I asked her how she prepares it. She explained how to find the right type of spruce, not too old or too young, to take only a bough to boil for a certain amount of time. (personal communication)

When I returned home, I followed her careful instructions. I started drinking spruce tea on a daily basis, not to resolve my headaches, but to better understand the purposes of drinking for a better lifestyle. Beforehand, my cluster migraines were still attacking me at a great frequency and intensity, and I had dismissed using any neurological prescriptions during that time. Within a week of drinking the spruce tea, my headaches had basically disappeared. It is the eco-animus of the spruce tree that holds the healing properties.

For the pharmaceutical companies, I would not suggest coming to Alaska to harvest spruce trees for a miracle cure. The eco-animus knows what its offspring is being used for, whether it is for personal or pecuniary gain or for spiritual and physical healing. Spruce tea prepared for something other than traditional medicine would not have the same healing properties as that which is prepared with respect to eco-animus. For

preparing any type of traditional medicine, *what* is prepared is not nearly as important as the *how* and *why* traditional medicine is prepared.

I relayed to the neurologist what I feel contributed to the diminished attacks using Athabascan Knowledge, and he literally laughed in a condescending manner! I had another MRI done, but the results were the same as the first. When I met Catherine again, I relayed to her about my experience with taking her advice. She was genuinely happy for me. I truly appreciate what Catherine has done for me. I still do get migraines every once in a while, but the frequency and intensity is manageable so that I can continue with my daily activities.

I am an Iñupiaq who now lives in Fairbanks, considered an urban area by Alaska standards, and the healthiness of the spruce trees are an important factor when preparing the spruce tree. Many of the spruce I see do not have the right color, some with an ugly brown tint to the boughs. I have to drive far out of the city to find the right type of tree to be used. I feel that the urban trees are too polluted to be used for medicine. The physical pollutants are causing pollution to the eco-animus, affecting nature and its role in as a living thing in our eco-system.

Walter Attla states, “The culture and the land are intermingled. You can’t really separate the culture, the land, and our people.” (KUAC-TV, 1987) This statement is complimentary to the research that Wright shares, “It is through *senh*³ that a symbiotic relationship or psychic dynamism between man and his environment is maintained.” (1995) I can imagine the amount of pollutants the Native and non-Native human is experiencing in the urban setting. The Iñupiaq word for “spirit” is *ilitqusiḡ*. Not only are we collecting physical pollutants such as carbon monoxide from vehicles and poor nourishment from fast foods, but also our *ilitqusiḡ* is being tainted by pollutants. A small infant is able to sleep through loud noise situations due to a natural defense mechanism, but it may severely damage the infant’s physical hearing permanently if exposed for long periods of time or to high decibels (Eisenberg, Murkoff, & Hathaway, 2004). I can imagine that our *ilitqusiḡ* is affected the same way, being exposed to the noise pollution of the urban areas. The same idea can apply to artificial light and visual pollution. The

³ Wright defines the Koyukon word *senh* as, “manifestations of the dynamic aspect of nature as centered, focused, and transmitted through the potency of nature, which might be characterized in western terms as an impersonal force inherent in all things.” (1995)

defense mechanisms our *ilitqusiḡ* have developed, in order to adapt to these artificial surroundings, prevents us from experiencing the full connection with the eco-animus.

Cleansing the *ilitqusiḡ* of pollutants.

In *Education Indigenous to Place*, Barnhardt and Kawagley state, “Being in and with the environment the whole year round, students can experience the vicissitudes of seasons, flora, fauna, sunlight, freezing, thawing, wind, weather permutations, gaining intimate knowledge about place - using their five senses and intuition to learn about themselves and the world around them.” (1999) Wilson states, “They [Gwitch’in] believe that although Native people face more social and psychological problems, they have the traditional methods to both prevent and treat these problems if given the proper environment to nourish their skills.” (1996) Using the five senses coupled with Native traditions may be an effective way to help cleanse the polluted *ilitqusiḡ*.

***Niḡiruna* - “I eat”**

Niḡipianitchuni niḡisunnaqtuḡ. When you don't have any Eskimo food, you really crave it. I have worked as a dorm parent for NANA⁴ at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. We had Native students who mostly were living away from home for the first time in their life. I have noticed considerable change in motivation, attitude, and spirit, as the weeks away from home grew longer. However, their spirits shined a little brighter when we shared our Iñupiaq food with them. Some Western scientists may suggest that the chemical reaction of nutritious stimuli produces endorphins to the brain causing placidity; I also acknowledge the reaction, however, that chemical reaction does not produce the same affect for everyone. When I eat seal meat, dried fish, frozen fish, *masu* or Eskimo potato, carrots, seal oil, *maktak*, caribou stew, dried meat, and berries, I feel rejuvenated and more serene. I did not see the same reaction when I offered seal meat to a friend of mine who had never had it before trying it. Another thing to consider is the physical aspect of traditional food: “Subsistence foods have nutritional benefits that make them preferable to many purchased foods. They are rich in many nutrients, low in fat, and

⁴ NANA is a regional Native corporation. Information about NANA can be found at: <http://www.nana.com>

contain more heart-healthy fats and less harmful fats than many non-Native foods.” (ANSC, 2002)

Tautuktun̄a - “I see”

My mother was born and raised in Teller, Alaska. She attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1960. She had told me that one of the things she missed was being able to look at the horizon, and that there were too many trees. I know that she wasn’t inferring that the trees were pollutants. As I understand, what she was saying is that the visual impact of her new environment was not as familiar and comforting as it would be from her home. With television, video games, and other types of multimedia, our attention span has become shorter. The visual pollutants have changed our patience. Angela Huntington, an Athabascan Elder, states, “The biggest problem in our villages is hard to...really hard to talk to young generation. You know, if we talk to our grandkids or others. They don't believe what we talk about. You know, there's too much this TV, Nintendo and whatever. You name it. They got their face in that. I don't know what they learn from that. That's what's spoiling our young generation that I know.” (ANKN, 2007)

A Yupiaq friend of mine, Joe Tyson, took some young campers from Anchorage on a hike in Seldovia. The campers were encouraging Joe to facilitate various activities. After a while, Joe told them to just sit down and watch the bay. The campers sat down. When they were starting to get anxious, an eagle started circling the bay and dived down to catch a fish. This was something that the campers had never witnessed (personal communication). Observing nature allows us to better understand the past, present, and future. Visually, and with the guidance of a cultural-bearer, the natural landscape is like a history book. There is no way that anyone can capture the magnificent golden leaves in Fairbanks during the fall on film or canvas. We can learn a lot from nature. What we learn depends on the locale and the cultural-bearer. I have a great appreciation of traditional Native artwork and craftsmanship. To be able to take wood, clay, ivory, bone or antlers and make beauty and tools takes great observation skills.

Tusaaruna – “I hear”

MP3 and other audio players have become more compact and easily accessible. The noise from traffic, television, trains, airplanes, and other urban devices is present, but those of us living with these sounds have become acclimated to ignore them. It's not until I am away from the city and out in nature that I remind my sense of hearing that I've been surrounded by urban background noise.

I was working as a Native counselor at Lathrop High School in Fairbanks in 1995-97. During that time, I took a group of students to Seattle for a youth conference. At the conference, one of the evening activities was a powwow. There must have been 15 drums there in this stadium. What an experience! I feel the same experience when I hear the Iñupiaq dance groups at the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics, or when I drum with my dance group, Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. When I was dancing with the Greatland Traditional Dancers in Anchorage in the late 1980s, I would dance the Yupiaq men's style on my knees. There have been many times that, after a dance, I would notice that my knees have become bloody. My *ilitqusiḡ* felt and was moved by the traditional music. No CD or other recordings can capture that connection. Listening to an Elder tell a traditional story provides an opportunity to learn cultural context, as well as practice patience and observation skills. I would strongly encourage the interaction of listening to stories and recollections in the Native language. I feel that any Native language is a beautiful sound. Some words for animals sound like how the animals sound in nature. A story can be a very melodious experience. This may help to identify the sounds in nature, being aware of your surroundings.

Nairuna – “I smell”

The air quality in the Fairbanks area is a major concern. During the summer, there is the likelihood of smoke in the air due to neighboring forest fires. During the winter, the exhaust from vehicles is not properly ventilated. There are times that I can smell the fast food restaurants. When I am in an elevator, I have sometimes been offended by strong perfumes. “New research suggests the perception of everyday smells can trigger physical symptoms such as fatigue, chest pain and lower back pain.” (PsychCentral, 2007)

Nothing wakes me up from a deep sleep except for the smell of freshly brewed gourmet coffee. I feel that smell is a powerful sense, triggering memories and reactions. I love the smell of campfire smoke, watching the flames dance. The smell of the salt water from the ocean and the fish reminds me of camping with my family. The smell of Iñupiaq food reminds me of having dinner with my family. When I boil spruce boughs, the smell permeates the air.

Aqtuḡaa – “I touch”

When I began working more with computers, I started getting pains in my wrists. Blanche Qapuk Lincoln, an Iñupiaq Elder from Kotzebue, states, “I was told that nothing strengthened or toughened my father more than hunting seals. He learned to run swiftly and became tough by hunting.” (NWABSD, 1992) Today’s technology makes life easier, but it also introduces new ailments like tendonitis.

My father was an ivory carver. I remember when I was growing up, he would offer to pay us 25 cents to help him sand his carvings in the early mornings. Feeling the ivory dust gave me a sense of contribution, even though I was only a “little helper.” Physical labor, including chopping wood, carrying water, building something, and subsistence preparation, can be taxing, but our *ilitqusiḡ* understands the sense of purpose and need for these activities. I feel more content with each accomplishment. I understand that today’s generation has it easier in regards to the lack of demand or need than that of our ancestors. I truly admire how they were able to survive. We must keep in mind to offer to help the Elders with the physical labor as a way to honor them. Steam baths have great healing and cleansing properties.

In mid October in the late 1990s, I was on my way to Gambell to work with educators to catalog their cultural resources. I was able to spend some time in Nome, which is south of Teller, waiting for my connecting flight. Though I had never been to Nome, I felt like I had come “home.” The smell of the water was the first thing my senses experienced. I felt the humidity and the wind. After I arrived in Gambell, had free time in the evening, and ate some dried fish with seal oil, I walked to the beach and watched and listened to the distant water. I was inspired to sing an Iñupiaq song I had made up honoring our parents and grandparents. In the distance, I observed a walrus swimming

closer to where I was. Though this was only a short visit in this area, my *ilitqusiġ* felt welcomed back.

Each person is unique. Individuals should look at their own community and culture for what may apply to them. Interior people may enjoy moose meat better than seal, or miss the trees if they visit the coastal areas. Others may understand the feeling after eating a turkey dinner or eating chocolate. One of my sons doesn't like either turkey or chocolate. Not everyone likes the same type of music. An athlete may feel exhilarated after a long run. The smell of smoked salmon may not be the same if a person does not like fish.

Summary

Humans and nature are interconnected through our eco-animus. When natural traditional medicine is polluted, it adversely affects the healing process. When our *ilitqusiġ* is tainted, it adversely affects nature through our cultural connection. Our cultural well-being depends on how we can heal ourselves as individuals. A positive direction toward healthy *ilitqusiġ* and eco-animus is to seek guidance through our communities and Elders. Using the five senses, try not to just see, but observe; try not to just hear, but listen; try not to just taste, but savor; try not to just smell, but absorb; and try not to just feel, but touch. Utilizing the Native community and Elders to become more culturally healthy, try not to just experience, but live. This is only one way to show respect for nature.

Kaniqsimauraaliq Irrutchikun – Spirituality

Ilitqusiāt is “the way people are.” Their spiritual characteristics motivate their attitudes and actions. Inupiat ilitqusiāt actually means “how the Eskimo are.” Your ilitqusiāq is motivated by your spirit: happy spirit, sad spirit, fighting spirit, calm spirit.

Rachel Craig, Kotzebue Elder (VNN, 1996)

In this chapter, I will be looking at *Kaniqsimauraaliq Irrutchikun*, “Spirituality”, one of the *Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt*, the “Iñupiaq Values”. I will first share my upbringing living in Anchorage, having to attend at least two different church services each week. Second, I will provide a history of missionaries coming into Alaskan villages, looking at the influences of spiritual change. Third, I will provide my research on ancestral spiritual practices of the Iñupiat, including an etymology of Iñupiaq words relating to spirituality. Lastly, I will share contemporary interpretations of spirituality among the *Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat* or “Urban Iñupiat”. This is one person’s view on one culture and on one Iñupiaq value.

Upbringing

My mother grew up with her family attending Catholic religious services. My father grew up with his family attending Lutheran religious services. I grew up with four brothers having to attend both Catholic and Lutheran religious services. The services not only included going to two churches each week for mass, but also attending catechism, bible study, social and special events. My father eventually became a lay pastor. Also, three of my brothers and I were alter boys.

As a family, we would spend much of our summer weekends camping. We loaded the rowboat on top of the van and packed the camping and fishing gear. We have explored many of the lakes and rivers connected to the Alaska road system, north and south of Anchorage. We went fishing for rainbow trout, salmon, and hooligan (not all at the same place). The fishing season was not limited only to the summertime. We went ice fishing near Wasilla. I remember one time going out to Finger Lake. The ice was completely smooth without any snow, and the wind was blowing fairly hard. The stool

that we all shared would slide across the frozen lake. This was our family's way of subsistence.

Needless to say, much of our diet was fish. Growing up in Anchorage, my brothers and I grew up eating Western foods: hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, etc. But we also grew up eating *niqipiaq* (Iñupiaq food). We ate seal meat, dried fish, frozen fish, *masu* or Eskimo potato, carrots, seal oil, *maktak*, caribou stew, dried meat, greens and berries. My father was the youngest in his family. Hence, being the youngest sibling, and living in an urban environment, *niqipiaq* was sent to my father to share with his family.

Growing up in Anchorage, my four brothers and I participated in various activities. We were active in Native social activities including Native games, Iñupiaq singing, and other gatherings, usually held at the Native Outreach, a Lutheran church in Anchorage. We would also attend the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics either held in Anchorage or Fairbanks. I also participated in non-Native activities, such as the Boy Scouts, basketball, baseball, and other functions. I used to visit both of my grandmothers, since they both lived in Anchorage. My paternal grandmother lived with us for a short time. As I said before, my father's first language was Iñupiaq, but he spoke mostly English at home. My brothers and I did grow up knowing some Iñupiaq phrases.

One thing my father told me is that our family is not supposed to be afraid of bears, because my great-great grandmother was an *aṇatquq*, or shaman. He said that she was able to change herself into a bear and that she was a good *aṇatquq*. Later on, I went hiking in the mountains between Girdwood and Eagle River with three friends of mine. It was a two-day hike and about 26 miles in the springtime. About 14 miles into the hike, we lost the trail, so we started going up the mountain to see if we could find it. I noticed behind me, since I was carrying up the back of the line, a black bear quietly coming out of some bushes. I let the others become aware of the bear's presence, but the bear did not pay any attention to us. The black bear continued on its way following the trail that we were on just moments before. After waiting to make sure it was gone, we went to where the bear came out only to find the trail that we lost. I feel that it was my great-great grandmother showing us the way.

When I went to college at Western Washington University, I decided to take a foreign language class. I flipped through the options in the catalogue and chose Ancient

Greek. I didn't know at the time that it was not a spoken language course, and I didn't know that learning the language was construed to be very challenging. During the first year of instruction, the *Koine* dialect was taught using the New Testament, since it was originally written in Ancient Greek. Eventually, I bought a copy of the New Testament in Ancient Greek. My love for learning languages still continues today.

I began reading Plato and other classics in the original Ancient Greek language. I also read Homer in the more archaic dialect. I felt that I wanted to learn more about other ways of being, and I realized that I knew very little about religions other than my own upbringing. I learned from a college friend that Buddhism wasn't construed as a religion, according to my friend, but rather a personal pursuit to enlightenment. So this made me think, "What did people think about Iñupiaq spirituality?"

When I first came aboard the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative in 1997, I went to a statewide meeting in Sitka, Alaska. Travelers were staying at the Sheldon Jackson College dorms for lodging, sharing a room with other travelers. I roomed with a non-Native, but he was also a respected rural educator. He initiated a discussion about shamans, asking my opinion about them. I shared the story about my great-great grandmother. He told me his perspective on shamans, what he felt was a first hand experience. He married a Native woman who was supposed to be married to a particular shaman by arrangement. He continued by saying that the shaman then did something to give the rural educator and his wife bad luck, terrible nightmares, etc. He said that he turned to Christianity to discontinue whatever the shaman did. His conclusion was that all shamans are evil and that there are no "good" shamans. He was very adamant about his view.

The dichotomy is not Christianity versus traditional Native practices, but rather the moral intent of *aṇatquq*. I acknowledge that there are some bad *aṇatquq*, but there are also some good *aṇatquq*. Shamans are individuals. I feel that it would be a generalization to say that all shamans are evil.

There are some people that feel that all *aṇatquq* are evil. From what I read, there were some very powerful *aṇatquq*. "[*Aṇatquq*], feasts, trading partners, and dancing-disappeared early because adherence to these aspects of the old way of lifeway conflicted with the missionaries' concepts of Christianity." (Hall, 1998) Before we talk about

aḡatqut, as well other spiritual activities, diminishing due to acculturation, we must first acknowledge to the introduction of Christianity from the immigrants.

Missionaries come to Alaska

The first recorded European contact in Alaska was in 1728 by Vitus Bering, a Dane exploring for Russia (Lund, 1974). Russians basically found out about Alaska in their attempts to expand their water routes in the 1700s, but not by Bering. In 1711, the Yakutsk government sent Petr Popov to northeastern Siberia (Ray, 1992). There were reports of Alaska Native people who were sometimes taken prisoner by the Chukchi. The Russians established trading with the Alaska Natives, as well as establishing missionaries and schools including those on Kodiak Island (Hopkins, 2008).

The United States later purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867. According to Hopkins, in 1877, Sheldon Jackson brought the first American missionary to Alaska at Fort Wrangell. Hopkins continues:

The missionaries represented a group of devoted and determined people and the condition of the Alaskan Natives presented a formidable challenge. Dr. Jackson was largely responsible for creating enough interest within the United States so that the Organic Act of 1884 was formulated and passed by the United States Congress. Very soon other religious denominations began to take an interest in the education of the Alaskan Native. In 1880 a group of religious societies met and divided Alaska into districts. Each group selected a portion of the territory to Christianize. The churches participating in this parley were the Presbyterian, Methodist, Moravian, Catholic, Episcopal, Swedish Evangelical Mission, Norwegian Evangelical- Congregational and Friends (Quakers). (Hopkins, 2008)

According to Lund, a Lutheran pastor was brought to Sitka to establish a church (Lund, 1974). Regardless of documented chronology of events, missionaries immigrated to Alaska. When the missionaries came, some told Alaska Natives that, “if they did not believe and become Christians, when they died, their spirits would go to a place called hell....He also said that the preacher wanted to warn them that pretty soon the world would be coming to an end.” (Wilder, 2007)

Some missionaries immediately set out to baptize the Alaska Natives. The price for baptism for one community was a white fox fur skin. An English or Christian name was given to the Alaska Native through the process of the baptism (Ray, 1992).

One of the first objectives for some missionaries was to abolish the evil shamans. Beatrice Mouse, an Iñupiaq Elder, recalls:

The people who work for God [missionaries] got rid of these frightening things. However, we can see them still once in a while. Outside anyone can see, for example, the snakes that crawl on the ground. Long ago people saw a lot of animals with scales. When the missionaries came to Kotzebue, people wanted to pray, but they did not know how. Our missionary used to be the husband of Carrie Samms. People talked to each other that they would like to do away with shamanism because it was frightening. They became converts. When a person is converted, he is washed with the water brought down from up there [heaven]. When he is sick, he wants a mixture of this water to wash his sickness away. People believed and became converts. Robbie said Christianity is stronger than shamanism. He started jailing the people who practiced shamanism because he was afraid. Those who practiced shamanism tried to work with things that do not exist. They made a mistake, and people were frightened by it. (Anderson, et al, n.d.)

Some of the other things that many missionaries abolished were the Alaska Native languages, traditional cultural education, and traditional dance and ceremonies. Missionaries, with the help from community members, built schools. My father's first language was Iñupiaq. He told me that when he was young and in school, he was punished severely for speaking his language.

With the introduction of the immigrants, new diseases were also introduced to the Iñupiat, as well as other Alaska Natives. Flu and tuberculosis epidemics struck many Alaska Natives, and non-Natives, killing a large percentage of villagers (Oquilluk, 1973). This left orphans in many villages, and many of the children were sent away from their families. This disrupted much of the cultural education that was passed down from through families.

There were many communities that were forbidden to dance songs passed down to them for generations. Wilder writes:

After the natives learned to sing hymns, the preacher forbade the Eskimos to sing their own native songs. The preacher told them not to sing any of their traditional songs again, because their songs were the songs of the devil. And the devil was an evil spirit that was trying to get their soul...and that any Eskimo who continued to sing their native songs would surely go there [hell] when they died. (Wilder, 2007)

Oquilluk writes that the Eagle-Wolf Dance, which was performed for generations and is a series of dances, is no longer performed. Most of the dances are now forgotten (Oquilluk, 1973). There are some Iñupiaq songs that are sung in the Iñupiaq language,

but there are many songs that are now only vocables, having the ancestral words and meanings lost.

The Iñupiat, as well as other Alaska Natives, are communal. We depend on the whole community in order to survive: physically, spiritually, and culturally. Alaska can be a harsh environment, especially in the winter. We are all connected and have moral responsibilities we follow in a community. We learn and live our culture with each other. A church provides a place to come together as a community, similar to the *qargi*, or community house. Religious leaders are beginning to recognize that the spiritual activities of Iñupiaq and other Alaska Native ancestors do not conflict with their beliefs.

My paternal grandmother, Gussie Topkok, was born in the early 1900s. When I was growing up, she stayed with my family for a short time. I can remember a bible always right by her bed. She would start every morning by reading her bible to begin her day. She and my aunt Maggie are mentioned in *Of Eskimos and Missionaries* for helping out the early pastors.

Before Colonization

Oquilluk writes that a long time ago, the Iñupiat had an easy life. The weather was so warm that the Iñupiat did not require clothing, and they lived for five generations. A prophet forewarned the Iñupiat about a great earthquake, the first disaster. After the earthquake, the people believed, “[from] that time on they began to think of spirits to help them.” (Oquilluk, 1973) The Iñupiat explored their natural environment and learned from nature.

Through oral history from my family members, I was told that everything has a spirit. The plants, animals, water, rocks, etc., everything in the ecosystem has a spirit. This is what I call the eco-animus. The eco-animus are the spirits that help us, and we are connected to the eco-animus through our own *ilitqusiḡ*, or spirit. If the eco-animus is treated with respect, including hunting and gathering practices, then the respect is reciprocated.

Wright explains, “The Koyukon recognize several categories of inspirational functionaries, including shaman, spirit mediums, and prophets.” (Wright, 1995) The Iñupiat, before colonization, had *aḡatqut*, mediums, healers, and prophets.

In the book *Maniiłaq*, the authors state, “Do not assume that oppression and fear was everyone's lot or that all shamanistic powers were evil. Some shamans served mainly as healers, and there were very good cultural activities carried out by the people as a whole.” (Pulu and Ramoth-Sampson, 1981) There was a very powerful *aṇatquq* who lived on the coast of Alaska. My approximation is that this situation took place in the 1800s. This powerful *aṇatquq* took caribou away from villages. (NWABSD, 1992 & Jones, 1985) His actions started a war with shamans and medicine men statewide. The *aṇatquq* traveled along the river to collect an army of shamans to fight this one bad *aṇatquq*. Since this account was documented at separate times, from the Koyukon and Iñupiaq perspectives, the historical significance suggests the presence of good *aṇatquq* in Alaska.

An *aṇatquq* would use helper spirits for his/her power. The type of helper spirits depended upon the environment surrounding the *aṇatquq*. An Iñupiaq *aṇatquq* would most likely have coastal spirit helpers, while an Indian shaman may have interior spirit helpers. (NWABSD, 1992). I have heard that a person can learn to be an *aṇatquq*, but I have also heard stories that the power from an *aṇatquq* can only be given to an individual as a gift. Mediums communicated with the spirits, but did not control them.

One of the highly respected and powerful prophets was a man named Maniiłaq. He was born in the early 1800s. (Pulu and Sampson, 1981) He made many prophecies that have already been fulfilled, including the coming of people with light skin and light hair. There are some prophecies yet to be come. The Iñupiaq Elders believe that he was a prophet sent from God. He was very powerful, too. There were some shamans who tried to kill Maniiłaq, but they were unable to do so.

Larry Mercurieff, an Unangan from St. Paul Island, spoke to a Cross-Cultural class at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in March 2008. He said that in order to understand nature, you have to use all senses to observe nature, without clouding your mind with thoughts. (L. Mercurieff, CCS 612 lecture, March 5, 2008) From this I can understand that the Iñupiaq healers learned how to use nature for medicinal purposes, through generations of trial and error, as well as through observations.

Iñupiaq names are given to babies at birth. A child is usually named after a recently deceased relative, and in some cases the deceased namesake is not a blood

relative. An Elder would know a child's genealogy just by his/her Iñupiaq name. The child is believed to take on the characteristics of the namesake, though the Iñupiat do not necessarily believe in reincarnation. (Craig, 1996) The Iñupiaq names are not gender specific. One of my sons has two Iñupiaq names, which is not an uncommon event. One of his names comes from a friend's daughter. When I told my friend about my son's love for Iñupiaq dancing, he replied that it was odd – he shared that his daughter wasn't active in dancing. It is believed that if an Iñupiaq name is not passed on, the spirit of that name will no longer exist.

Before the missionaries came to Alaska, the Iñupiat had the word *iivvaqsaat* meaning “souls of the deceased going around and around”. In the book *Maniiḷaq*, an Iñupiaq Elder states (English translation):

According to what most people have said here, it seems to be understood that the word *iivvaqsaat* meant the white people that did come after Maniiḷauraq's prediction but this word was used even before his time. At that time, it referred to the dead people rising again. It was said that on that day all the dead would rise again and it was also said that the day would be very great. Annaqaaluk's older brother had said, "When the *iivvaqsaat* come." It is said that they will come from the direction of daylight, meaning the east. The people comforted one another saying it would be the time when we would all see one another again.

The Iñupiaq Elder also states (English translation),

Mother also said that when people die, they go to the land of Aniraḡvik (which lit. means 'place of going out'). She said that this was where we go when we die. This was the belief held by the people before the Bible was introduced to them. This was how they explained death. It was the place where people would 'come out' from. (Pulu and Ramoth-Sampson, 1981)

Etymology of Iñupiaq words relating to spirituality

I feel that it is important to look at the Iñupiaq words for spirituality. Most of these words or phrases come from the Elders, giving an insight on what they translate the meaning of spirituality. Each Iñupiaq region has their own translation. Though I am still a language learner, I feel that I have a strong linguistic background to explore the etymology of the Iñupiaq words.

I have adapted the title of this research, “*Kaṇiqsimauraaliq Irrutchikun – Spirituality*” from the Village News Network. (VNN, 1996) The contributors to this

publication are from the NANA⁵ region. The word “*kañiqsimauraaliq*” comes from the word “*kañiqsi-*” which means “to understand” (Webster and Zibell, 1970 and MacLean, 1980). “*Irrutchikun*” comes from the word “*irrusiq*” meaning “personality, inner man, motive, spirit” (Webster and Zibell, 1970). On the North Slope, the Iñupiaq word for spirituality is *ukpiqqutiqaḡniq*. “*Ukpiq-*” is a verb meaning “to believe” (Webster and Zibell, 1970 and MacLean, 1980).

In the Webster and Zibell Iñupiaq dictionary, the authors have chosen to include a sub-heading for Old Religion. The list of words include shaman, medium, one who casts spells, etc. One of the words included is *qiḷaun* meaning “drum” and “divining rod”.

Oquilluk writes that the spirit men and women introduced Iñupiaq dances, drumming, and songs to the Kauweramiut. The spirits taught dancing and holding a feast in order to help a recently hunted *tingmiakpak*’s (giant eagle) spirit return to his mother. (Oquilluk, 1973). I have heard many times that music is a universal language. The Iñupiaq song and dance is a cultural expression of who we are, celebrating our respect for the eco-animus. I’ve been told that the reason the Iñupiat dance with gloves or mittens is that when we are dancing, we are very vulnerable. If we dance with bare hands, evil spirits may enter our bodies. Dancing is a big part of spirituality.

Aknik Paul Green expresses his concern that the new generation will not learn their Native language or songs. (Green, 1959) The respect for the eco-animus and following the Iñupiaq taboos needs to be taught to our future culture-bearers. The *Iñupiat Iḡitqusi*at and our cultural heritage is being passed down to our children, even to the urban Iñupiat.

⁵ NANA is a regional Native corporation. Information about NANA can be found at: <http://www.nana.com>

Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat

There are *Iñiqpaḡmiut Iñupiat*, urban Iñupiat, residing away from their ancestral homes. In Fairbanks, there are families whose ancestral homes are throughout the Iñupiaq region including Bering Straits, NANA, and Arctic Slope. I am the dance group leader of the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. Our dance group talks about the Iñupiaq Values and cultural heritage at every practice.

At one of our dance practices, one of the dancers talked about spirituality as, “a sense of well-being”. She shared that her father grew up traditional, making sure that he provided for the family, having a sense of well-being. Being able to hunt and feed his family, she expressed, gave satisfaction to her father.

Another dancer’s great-grandfather was a shaman, but she didn’t learn about it until her adulthood. She said that her feeling about spirituality was, “Respect for the environment, respect for everyone else.” She continued to say, “Even before the preachers came to the area, they [Iñupiat] knew there was right and wrong.”

One dancer expressed, “A lot of people confuse religion-ness with spirituality. You can be real religious, but not be spiritual.” She continued to say, “Spirituality is like believing in a Creator, that there is a Spirit...Being able to find that within yourself, find peace in yourself...Believing that we exist for a reason.”

Another dancer said that spirituality is, “who you are...what you learn from your family and culture.” She added that spirituality is, “learning everyday...knowing that you never stop learning.”

One of the older members of the dance group shared, “Spirituality starts with the word spirit, and that’s – I have felt a spirit in this word that you can’t see with your eyes. I’ve gone to visit my parents out in the village, and I felt like this is where my spirit came from, and this is where my spirit feels at home. And I can feel something there that you can’t touch with your hands or see with your eyes. And it’s not just the people who live there, the animals, the plants. Everything there has this spirit that we’re all connected to. I think spirituality is feeling the connection with, not just other people, but everything in this world.” (personal communication)

Kawagley describes the ruptures of “self” due to the influences of Western contact. (Kawagley, 1997) I feel that my *ilitqusiḡ*, or spirit, is as complex as a fish net. A fish net is something that is used by most Alaska Native cultures. The negative Western influences are like breaking lines made of sinew in the net. To make ourselves whole, some of us have used Western technology, plastic fish lines, to mend ourselves. We need to constantly mend our nets in order to catch life and not let anything pass through. We must use what is available to us, but remember the techniques on how to properly take care of our *ilitqusiḡ*.

I really admire the "survivors", the Elders and my ancestors. They not only survived the past epidemics that invaded in their communities, they survived the Western influences and maintaining their identity and culture. I feel that their motivation for survival was not a personal endeavor, but a cultural endeavor. When I listen to Elders, I hear a concern for our cultural survival when they speak. I feel that they have truly suffered for me and for future generations, so we have a responsibility to live a positive life for all our people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. We also have the responsibility to understand the traditional Indigenous worldview, as well as the traditional Western worldview.

Summary

I believe that the adapted, modern Indigenous worldview is as individualistic as there are different types of nets. We are not a homogenous society, nor are we an assimilated one. Each of us has a portion of a traditional Indigenous worldview, meaning that no one individual can represent one culture. It takes all of our people to remain a culture, retaining our own traditional worldview view. We continue to learn from each other, so we must continue to respect others and what they have to offer to mend our nets.

Catherine Attla, an Athabascan Elder, provides a wonderful summation of balancing two worldviews in *Make Prayers to the Raven*, “ ‘You know Pat [the first priest in Huslia], I’m really off balance right now. I’m learning more about church, but I’m carrying my grandfather’s way, or our old people.’ And he say, ‘You have to carry

both - you have to carry both. Both of them is right. Those people were given power from God to heal one another.' Boy, I felt good." (KUAC-TV, 1987)

In 2000, I had the fortune of meeting Marie Smith, the late and last Eyak Native speaker. She told me that she had one message for Alaska Native people, "Stop the hate and just love." (personal communication) She expressed a deep concern that Alaska Native people not have animosities, but to put hatred aside for the sake of our children. We need to just love in order to continue our Native way of being.

It is imperative to include spirituality when there is discussion about Indigenous studies, including epistemologies, ontologies, axiologies, and pedagogies. Spirituality is not only who we are, but also the act of learning who we are. It is important to keep in mind that spirituality and religion is not the same thing. In my opinion, religion is a thing or a belief. Spirituality is a process and what you live by.

In mid October in the late 1990s, I was on my way to Gambell to work with educators to catalog their cultural resources. I was able to spend some time in Nome, which is south of Teller, waiting for my connecting flight. Though I had never been to Nome, I felt like I had come "home." The smell of the water was the first thing my senses experienced. I felt the humidity and the wind. After I arrived in Gambell, had free time in the evening, and ate some dried fish with seal oil, I walked to the beach and watched and listened to the distant water. I was inspired to sing an Iñupiaq song I had made up honoring our parents and grandparents. In the distance, I observed a walrus swimming closer to where I was. Though this was only a short visit in this area, my *ilitqusiḡ* felt welcomed back.

Uvaṇa atīḡa Asiqḷuḡ. My Iñupiaq name is Asiqḷuḡ. I was named after one of my great-uncles, John Kakaruk. John was a reindeer herder, as well as an Iñupiaq drummer and dancer. I am the group leader of the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. I have three sons who are also part of the dance group. I have no doubt that my sons are proud of who they are and where their ancestors come from. I believe that my *ilitqusiḡ* will continue with them and their children long after I am gone.

Iñuuniaquatiuni Ikayuutiliq - Responsibility to Tribe

After being “discovered” and “colonized”, Indigenous people continue to adapt and to be subjected to the protocols of the dominant Western society. (Smith, 1999) With the introduction of bureaucratic frameworks in the Western corporate world, Alaska Native people have struggled and adapted while maintaining their own cultural protocols. These adaptations allow us to look at our *Iñuuniaquatiuni Ikayuutiliq*, “Responsibility to the Tribe”.

One of the examples of adapting in the Western corporate world is the educational process. Barnhardt writes about a successful president of a Native corporation participating in an undergraduate class on rural development. (Barnhardt, 2002) Before Western contact, the educational process of Alaska Native people was the responsibility of family members. The education being taught was survival and cultural skills, and it is still being taught today. If the knowledge was not passed down, the individual would not be able to survive in his/her environment.

After Western contact, schoolhouses or churches were built to educate the Alaska Native children. The teachers were generally not from the local areas, and they mostly taught the Western education. In many cases, the Native language was not allowed to be spoken, nor were survival and cultural skills taught. When epidemics broke out, or educational limits of the teachers were met, children were sent out of their villages to continue their Western education. This contributed, partially but not wholly, to some severing of cultural education in many communities.

The Western survival skills mean that children need to learn literacy, science, etc. In order to survive the pecuniary system, it is advantageous to complete the Western educational “hoops”. First, it is highly suggested to get a high school diploma. In order to get a better paying job, a bachelor’s degree is the next step, then a master’s degree, and then a doctorate degree. But this idea of “getting ahead in the world” is not only for individual gain, but also encouraged by the Elders in order to better help the Native communities (ANKN, 2007).

In the mid 1990s, I worked for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District as a Home School Liaison for the Alaska Native Education department. Though my title suggested that I was a go-between for the school and home, I also helped students with academics in the classroom. One of my own contributions to this job was to teach Eskimo dancing and other cultural activities. I brought it upon myself to not only teach cultural knowledge that I know, but also bring in local cultural bearers and learn from them.

My supervisor was the then president of a fairly new Alaska Native educator association, the Association of Interior Native Educators (AINE). Though I was not actively seeking to get a teaching certificate, but considered myself an educator, I inquired about membership. The reason I asked about membership was due to hearing in education forums about the lack of male Alaska Natives in the education field. I was told by the AINE president that only certified teachers can be members. However, according to the AINE bylaws in Carpluk's thesis, under Article III, Section 3, "This membership will be extended to those Natives who have a degree in other areas and are working in the field of education" (Carpluk, 1997). I did have a bachelor's degree at that time and was working in the educational field. This gives me the impression that the type of selectivity, or bias, is an example of bureaucracy not from the Indigenous epistemology.

One of the events that followed in my life is that I was hired as the Indigenous Curriculum Specialist for the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN). During that time, I have served on various advisory boards, including the Teachers Experiencing the Arctic and Antarctic (TEA), Teachers & Researchers Exploring and Collaborating (TREC), Northwest Math and Science Coalition, and Imaginarium Outreach. I also teach a master's class on the Cultural Atlases as a Pedagogical Strategy.

I have witnessed bilingual educators who have worked in their communities for, in most cases, longer than the certified teachers. These educators not only have a better understanding of education, Native and non-Native, they have a vested interest in the children's education. Many of the children are relatives of the educators. Some of the bilingual teachers have shared that they cannot leave the community to obtain a teaching certificate due to family obligations or similar reasons. Many of the teachers are involved in subsistence activities during the summer, and need to work as bilingual teachers during the winter months to survive the pecuniary system. These bilingual teachers, most of

them are cultural bearers, only make a fraction of the certified teachers. Though there have been “ladder” programs available in the past, many of these programs are grant funded and most do not last for very long. This example shows the Western bureaucratic frameworks that Alaska Natives face today.

However, the frameworks to benefit the Indigenous epistemology in Western bureaucracy are slowly changing. Barnhardt writes, “Institutions that are intended to serve the development needs of minority people must encourage a free flow of information into and out of the decision-making structure of the institution.” (Barnhardt, n.d.) Dr. Barnhardt puts “his money where his mouth is”. He is currently the director for the Cross Cultural Studies program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). He has been a strong advocate of Native education and the Native ways of knowing and learning.

As I have mentioned above, I have taught a master’s class, and this was in the Cross Cultural Studies (CCS) department. Even though I do not currently have a master’s degree, my experience in working with Alaska Native communities documenting their cultural knowledge in the form of Cultural Atlases was recognized by Dr. Barnhardt. He continues to encourage knowledgeable Alaska Native educators to be intimately involved in the decision-making structure of the CCS department. Other instructors of CCS courses include individuals with a master’s degree, including Lolly Carpluk, Virginia Ned, Linda Green, and George Owletuck, all of whom are Alaska Native.

UAF is making some headway in regards to recognizing the knowledge of Indigenous people. Since the 1960s, UAF has been awarding honorary doctorate degrees to our cultural bearers. The list includes Catherine Attla, Chief Andrew Isaac, Chief Peter John, Rev. Chief David Salmon, Nora Dauenhauer, Sidney Huntington, and Eliza Jones.

Currently, there is a proposal for a disciplinary doctoral degree in Indigenous Studies at UAF. Among the Alaska Native students, there is a great deal of interest for this program. This would allow the Alaska Native reciprocity between communities and students to not only survive the Western bureaucratic frameworks, but also further our *Iñuuniaquatiuni Ikayuutiliq*, “Responsibility to the Tribe”. With more Indigenous scholars in the education field, serving other Indigenous students, we can help and share with each other.

Discussion

Findings and Interpretations

In December 2007, Ronald Brower, Sr. stated in a class presentation an old Iñupiaq saying from the Elders, “Now that you have knowledge, what are you going to do?” The participants will have stewardship of the research. Participants will be able to identify what is necessary to maintain our Iñupiaq cultural heritage. What we do is up to the community.

One of my concerns is to maintain those who wish to remain anonymous. There is one potential participant who expressed that this person would be happy to be interviewed, but this person would not want the person’s mother present. Even revealing the person’s gender may be enough information for other participants to conclude the identity. Another concern that I have is that rural Iñupiat may continue question the authenticity of urban Iñupiat-ness. It is my hope and trust that the Iñupiaq Elders will provide directives and support.

Pavva is a fairly young dance group, compared to some of the dance groups who have been around for generations. Hence, some of our dance group members were hesitant to perform when other Iñupiaq dance groups were participating. However, I believe that we have received cultural validation, particularly at two separate events. In 2007, Pavva performed for the Alaska Federation of Natives Elders’ reception at the University of Alaska Museum. All of the Iñupiaq Elders expressed gratitude that there is an Iñupiaq dance group in Fairbanks for the Iñupiat living here. One Elder said, “Keep it up!” In 2009, Pavva performed at World Eskimo Indian Olympics for the first time. Other Iñupiaq dance groups said to Pavva, “The more...the merrier”. They were stating that they were glad that there is an Iñupiaq dance group available in Fairbanks.

The Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks have been extremely helpful and supportive in my research. I told the group that I was not able to include all of the Iñupiat Iḡitqusiāt discussions in my written master’s project. Members of the group told me to get my recorder out and started to immediately talk about one of the values.

There is still a need for some urban Iñupiat to understand that they are Iñupiat, even though they may have been raised in an urban setting. At one potluck setting, I heard that one person does not like to eat *maktak*. This person stated, “It’s because I’m a

city Native.” However, I know that this person does eat other Iñupiaq foods. Pavva wants to continue the discussions about the Iñupiat Iḡitqusiat. This research will continue beyond the master’s project, either in the form of a doctoral dissertation, definitely with the contemporary urban Iñupiat.

One of the strongest messages for all Iñupiat is from an Elder in Kotzebue. William Hensley writes, “To me, the beauty of what became known as Iñupiat Iḡitqusiat-Iñupiat Values-was the fact that they were not material. They were deeply entrenched in the mind and heart and spirit, and entirely transportable. You can be anywhere in the world and retain your Iñupiaq identity and values. You can pursue the highest academic credentials and become as wealthy as Bill Gates and still be the Iñupiaq of whom your forefathers would be proud” (Hensley, 2009).

The urban Iñupiat may be able to better understand their *Iñuuniaquatiuni Ikayuutiliq*, Responsibility to Tribe. Their sense of place and cultural heritage, through the research, will be based on individual interviews and collaborations. Each participant will have an opportunity to examine and define what an Iñupiaq person is.

Wilson writes that it is the community who defines Elders and shows reciprocity. (Wilson, 1996) I feel that it is the community who should define our future cultural bearers. The cultural knowledge and education for our future cultural bearers is important to identify. The Iñupiat community and Elders will accomplish that knowledge collectively. Reciprocal respect for our future cultural bearers is necessary.

Personally, I have much to gain from the research. I have three sons. They are intimately involved with Iñupiat activities. My wife and I speak a little of the Iñupiaq language at home. We are actively involved with the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers of Fairbanks. I feel that my sons are proud of who they are and have a deep understanding of being Iñupiaq. I feel that my sons and I, as well as other urban Iñupiat, have much to learn about our cultural heritage.

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