



# Sharing Our Pathways

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A newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative  
Alaska Federation of Natives ♦ University of Alaska ♦ National Science Foundation

## Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Spirit as a Foundation for Education

by Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley



*Participants at the Cross-Cultural Orientation Program Camp at Old Minto gather on the banks of the Tanana River for instruction.*

Modern science studies that which is visible using many technological devices to refine their observations. Theories are constructed, used, modified or discarded as new information and findings warrant. The task of modern science has been to simplify Nature, learn of its underlying logic and then use that logic to control Nature (Briggs, 1992:14). Indigenous societies study that which is invisible to temper the development of technology and guide its association with Nature. The Yupiaq society deals with trying to understand the irregularities of Nature which is underlain with patterns of order. Many unseen forces are in action in the elements of the universe.

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# Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative

## Ray Barnhardt, Co-Director

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
ANKN/ARSI  
PO Box 756730  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730  
(907) 474-5086 phone  
(907) 474-5208 fax

## Oscar Kawagley, Co-Director

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
ANKN/ARSI  
PO Box 756730  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730  
(907) 474-5403 phone  
(907) 474-5208 fax

## Dorothy M. Larson, Co-Director

Alaska Federation of Natives  
1577 C Street, Suite 201  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
(907) 274-3611 phone  
(907) 276-7989 fax



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We welcome your comments and suggestions and encourage you to submit them to:

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Harper Building  
P.O. Box 756730  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-6730  
(907) 474-5086 phone  
(907) 474-5208 fax  
<http://zorba.uafadm.alaska.edu/ankn>  
e-mail: [fnpse@aurora.alaska.edu](mailto:fnpse@aurora.alaska.edu)

Newsletter Editor: Lolly Carpluk  
Layout & Design: Paula Elmes

To begin to understand these phenomena, Yupiaq science education must begin with the five elements—earth, air, fire, water and spirit. The sacred gifts of each must be understood, as well as the human activities which contribute to the despiritualization and reduction of these life-giving gifts. In order to be holistic, the activities must include Yupiaq language and culture, language arts, mathematics, social studies, arts and crafts and sciences. All must be interrelated as all of earth is interrelated. For example, in dealing with the element air, the teacher could select the sacred gift of weather. And what an unpredictable choice! Like many Yupiaq myths, weather is so very dynamic, ever changing, and, like the myth, very mystical.

The wind has irregularities of constantly varying velocity, humidity, temperature and direction due to topography and other factors. There are nonlinear dimensions to clouds, irregularities of cloud formations, anomalous cloud luminosity and different forms of precipitation at different levels. There are patterns, however tenuous, such as the path of a jet stream or fronts to be studied. The Native students' visual acuity and memory for detail could be used to advantage. There is very little in this universe which is linear, in a grid or in a two-dimensional square or three dimensional cube. The weather's dynamic is that the part of its part is part of a part which is a part of another part and so on. The local Native elders could explain how they were able to predict weather based upon subtle messages given to them by the sun twenty-four hours before it happened. This involves the language of feelings of the inner world coupled with the language of reason. Being inclined to the spiritual, the Native was able to understand and accept the unpredictable permutations of weather. The Native people had learned certain general predictable patterns of

weather connected to the seasons and moons. Yet, the Native student could get acquainted with some more predominant tools of the meteorologist such as the thermometer, barometer, anemometer, hydrometer, satellite pictures and other tools to give the elders' knowledge depth, detail and a broader view. Introducing students to the notion of irregularities and anomalies of form and force (chaos and fractals) necessarily introduces them to holism. The key idea is for the students to understand the interconnectedness of all things in the universe.

Of utmost importance in using the five elements of life to teach science is assuring that the students understand that the sacred gifts of each is a gift to the life-giving forces of the living earth (or Mother Earth). The teacher must be careful to explain what those gifts are absolutely necessary for life on earth to continue. All these five elements' gifts make possible for creation on earth to continue. The Yupiaq honored and respected these gifts in the rituals and ceremonies. Take for example, the *Nakaciug* or the "Blessing of the Bladders." The Yupiaq people believed that when the seal or some other sea mammal gave itself to the hunter, that the spirit of the seal entered its bladder upon giving up its life. This required that the people take care to remove the bladder, inflate it to dry and save it for the winter Bladder Festival to honor the sacred gift of the element, spirit. In this way the Yupiaq people honored and showed respect for the gift of the element earth for giving birth to animals upon which they depended for survival as a people.

During the festival, the bladders were reinflated with life-giving air and hung on poles for the duration of the activities. In the *qasgiq* were placed two three-to-four foot stout poles in front of the place of honor for the elders. The honors seating was located at the rear of the community

house. On the flattened upper end were placed two earthen lamps with wicks which were \*then filled with seal oil. The wicks were lighted and the lamps kept burning during the entire festival. One or two people were given the responsibility of keeping the lamps going. The gift of the element fire was used to light and give some warmth to the community house. To purify the air and the participants in the house, wild parsnips were burned. Another gift of the element earth, the parsnip plant was used to create purifying smoke with the transforming gift of the element fire. Fire, with the gift of air, transformed the seal oil to heat and light.

At the conclusion of the Bladder Festival, the bladders were taken down, deflated, and carried to the ocean or river where an opening in the ice had been made. With collective mindfulness of all the Yupiaq participants that the spirits of the animals were happy and satisfied with the care and careful execution of the required rituals and ceremonies, and that they would return and give themselves to the hunters, the bladders were returned to the sacred gift of the element water, the womb of creation.

A multi-disciplinary and -sensory study of the elements can be undertaken for the entire school year. The students would begin to understand that the experience of knowing and making the place a friend takes time. The students can be helped to fine tune their endosmotic sense-makers through carefully planned and executed lessons of observation that incorporate their Yupiaq language of feeling with the language of reason. The ultimate gift is that of the element spirit. This gift is, through the Yupiaq language, mythology, rituals and ceremonies, the students are taught the "correct lifeway, a lifeway appropriate to place" (Mills, 1990:159).

The modern schools are not teaching students how to live a life that feels right. Rather, the schools are

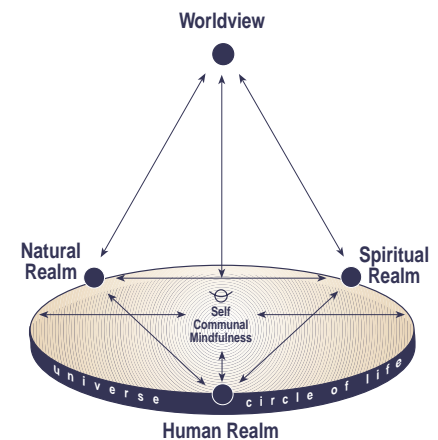
giving a lot of information to the students without also showing them how they can transfer the information into useful knowledge for making a living. Another step is to individually and collectively as a people see how the usable knowledge could be transformed into wisdom to make a life. The students now look at an innovative teacher who refuses to use existing curricula, syllabi, lessons plans, media presentations, photocopied materials and so on, as not really teaching. They expect to be given a lot of information and to be entertained. The many machines, modern tools and the vaunted computers are not enough to teach a lifeway that feels right. It is more important that we use the Yupiaq values and culture well interspersed with imagination or intuition from within and the element spirit to make the new lifeway that feels right.

During the years which this activity is being done, the participants will explore, plan and implement ways to make the Alaska Native mythology as a teaching tool for the sciences as well as the humanities. Within the humanities (mythology) are the sciences and within the sciences are the humanities.

Kindergarten through third grade could possibly talk about the five elements generally. This is what earth does: it provides homes for people, animals and plants. Air is what you breathe. Fourth through the sixth grades can begin to talk about certain gifts that each element gives to earth to make it good and beautiful. They can begin to talk about the water cycle and begin to see how it is affected by the sun, water, land, air, plants and people. The junior high grades can begin to talk not only of the gifts, but how the activities of the human being affects the life supporting gifts of the five elements. The high school students can begin to discuss and research the five elements' gifts and how people and pollution

reduce the life supporting role of the gifts. They can expand their knowledge of the Yupiaq peoples' perceptions and behaviors to the natural and spiritual worlds to keep them sustainable.

The teachers and teachers-to-be must be taught that the world is non-linear and that, as a result, science will never understand everything about the universe. They must also realize and appreciate that in modern scientific and technological endeavors, mathematics, science and technology are interrelated as are all other



disciplines. It behooves that science education and teaching in general become aligned to the common philosophical thread, or the "distant memory," as it is called by N. Scott Momaday, of the ecological perspective. All peoples of the earth began from this vista, and therefore such a perspective makes it more probable and possible for attaining a new consciousness for a sustainable life. ♦

## References:

- Briggs, J. (1992). *Fractals the patterns of chaos*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Mills, S. (1990). *In praise of nature*. Washington, D. C. and Covelo, CA.: Island Press.

## Annenberg Rural Challenge Award

by Dorothy M. Larson

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) was notified by the Annenberg Foundation of the \$3 million award of funding that will augment the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative that the National Science Foundation awarded to AFN in collaboration with the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

### Village Science: Developing Science Curriculum

by Alan Dick

The sequence in which we develop science materials is not the same as the sequence it should be presented to students. That is, the creative process seldom has the same sequence as the learning process. I have found the following to be a helpful pattern.

1. Download. Get your information on paper. Let the ideas flow. Don't worry about sequence, spelling, art or any other distraction. Let the ideas flow. Jot ideas as they come—in the bath, early morning during a walk, etc.
2. Organize the information. Group facts under sensible headings. Put the information in a logical sequence. Adjust for the audience (Grades 1–3, 4–6, 7–8, HS.) It helps to have pictures of students in front of you as you write. Adjust for the educational objectives stated in the curriculum.
3. Insert the educational applications: science concepts, social studies activities, math problems, language arts activities, etc.
4. Develop student responses giving careful attention to the level of understanding of the audience. This consists of measuring the students' response to the materials and measuring the degree to which the educational objectives were met.
5. Edit again for content and formatting. Check spelling, context, flow of words and thoughts. At this point other people are very valuable. It is quite difficult, if not impossible, to edit your own work. Correct spelling and typos.
6. Identify yourself. True learning comes from relationship. With pictures of students in front of you, share those things about yourself that you would want to know about someone writing this text for you.
7. Arrange the above information. A suggested sequence is:
  - A. Personal information about yourself
  - B. Text
  - C. Activities
  - D. Student response (evaluation)

The Annenberg Foundation has funded over a dozen projects under the Rural Challenge with efforts to focus on implementing change in rural education.

The Alaska Rural Challenge project will be funded over a four-year period which will coincide with the last four years of the Alaska RSI project that is funded for a five-year period. The first year for the Alaska RSI ends in November 1996. Drs. Oscar Kawagley and Ray Barnhardt of UAF and Dorothy M. Larson of AFN serve as co-directors of both projects.

The Alaska RSI project focuses on science, math and technology while the Alaska Rural Challenge project will focus on the social studies and humanities aspects of educational change. The two projects will provide a holistic approach and strategy in reform efforts that are culturally appropriate and aligned.

The projects are designed and implemented similarly in each of the cultural regions where they will work on the five initiatives—Oral Tradition as Education, Language/Cultural Immersion Camps, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the Subsistence Economy, Living in Place, Reclaiming Tribal Histories as well as statewide initiatives which will focus on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network and Curriculum Unit. Kawagley, Barnhardt and Larson are very pleased to make this announcement and will provide a more in-depth description of the initiatives to be implemented in conjunction with the Alaska RSI project. ♦





## Mokakit to Host Native Education Research Conference

by Ray Barnhardt

The Alaska Chapter of Mokakit, a Native educational research association, will be hosting the 1997 Mokakit Conference in Anchorage, Alaska February 10–12, 1997, in conjunction with the annual Bilingual/Multicultural Education and Equity Conference February 12–14. The theme for the conference will be “Native Pathways to Education.”

Mokakit is a Native-directed association of educators and researchers concerned with issues in Native education, first formed at the University of British Columbia in 1983 to foster the involvement of Native and First Nations people in all aspects of education and research. An Alaska Chapter of Mokakit was formed in 1996 with Oscar Kawagley serving as the chair. It will serve as the host for the 1997 Mokakit Conference. This will be the first time the conference will be held outside of Canada and we're expecting a lot of Canadian First Nations educators to attend.

The purpose of the Mokakit Conference is to provide an opportunity for people engaged in educational research impacting Native people to come together and learn from each other's work, and to explore ways to strengthen the links between education and the cultural well-being of indigenous people.

The Mokakit Conference will be held in conjunction with the annual Alaska Bilingual/Multicultural Education and Equity Conference (BMEEC) as co-hosts, with the last day of Mokakit overlapping with the BMEEC. The first two days of the Mokakit Conference will be organized into concurrent presentations and symposia to provide an opportunity for presenters to describe the work they are doing and identify issues of

mutual concern. Anyone interested in contributing to the conference as a presenter is encouraged to submit a proposal to the address listed below. Special consideration will be given to research issues associated with the documentation of indigenous knowledge systems and the implications of indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing and world views of the way we do education. Research issues and symposia topics may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Elders as the bearers of traditional knowledge and culture
- Camp environments for cultural and spiritual learning
- International Declaration of Indigenous People's Education Rights
- Incorporation of traditional knowledge into educational practices
- Indigenous and Western scientific traditions
- Designing culturally appropriate curriculum
- Indigenous leadership and resource development
- Education for community and economic development and Native self-determination
- Educational institutions as repositories and transmitters of culture
- Revitalization of indigenous languages
- Alternative approaches to standards for accreditation and qualifications

- Governance, funding and management of indigenous institutions
- Role of research in understanding cultural identity
- Support services for Native and First Nations students
- Indigenous teacher education programs and initiatives
- Tribal colleges and indigenous higher education institutions
- Culturally appropriate institutional environments and facilities

In addition to the research presentations, various cultural events, displays and field trips will be available including an opportunity to visit Native education programs in the Anchorage area. All interested individuals, programs and institutions are invited to submit proposals for workshops, panels or speakers on any of the above topics, or others that may be appropriate for the theme of the conference. Sessions may be one and one-half or three hours in length. Proposals should include the title, length, names of presenters and a brief description of the topic. *Workshop proposals should be submitted to the address below by December 15, 1996.*

### Information

For a registration packet and further information, contact Oscar Kawagley or Ray Barnhardt:

Alaska Native Knowledge Network  
Harper Building  
University of Alaska  
P.O. Box 756730  
Fairbanks, AK 99775

Phone: 907-474-5403 or 474-6431  
Fax: 907-474-5451.  
E-mail: rfok@aurora.alaska.edu or  
ffrjb@aurora.alaska.edu. ♦

## Science and Math Support Available from the SMCNWS

by Stephanie Hoag

The Science and Math Consortium for Northwest Schools (SMCNWS) is an organization that has been funded to:

1. Identify, inventory and disseminate resources for science and math education.
2. Provide technical assistance and training in support of state and local initiatives (such as Alaska RSI!) for quality science and math content, curriculum improvement and teacher enhancement.

As the Alaska state coordinator for the consortium, I am interested in finding ways to help the participants in the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative meet their goals. Last spring, we gave travel grants to help educators participate in many training activities for rural, locally relevant science education. These included the Old Minto Camp, Project WILD, the 4-H Fisheries Project, and the Alaska Pacific University's summer science program for rural teachers.

We are working on creating a mailing list to contact math and science educators directly about free and inexpensive classroom materials, training opportunities, grants available and many other resources. We'll use e-mail as the primary means of disseminating information, but would like to encourage anyone interested to sign up—even if they don't use e-mail yet!

To sign up for the mailing list, you may contact me using the information given below, or sign up via the World-Wide Web at <http://www.col-ed.org>. (Look for SMCNWS and "become a partner".) In addition to signing up to receive information, please contact me if you want to tell other educators about great math and science resources you have found.

Another project underway is an inventory of all of the "informal" science and math education providers in Alaska. This includes museums, youth

programs, government agencies, and other organizations that have science exhibits, hands-on kits to distribute, classroom materials, speakers and experts to talk to classes, math- and

science-related activities for young people and other types of programs. We'll be distributing a directory later this year. Meanwhile, please feel free to contact me for information about informal science and math providers, or to tell me about any organizations or programs I might have missed!

You may contact me by phone, fax, mail or e-mail as follows:

Stephanie Hoag  
Alaska Coordinator, SMCNWS  
119 Seward #4  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Phone: 907-463-4829  
Fax: 907-463-3446  
E-mail: [shoag@ptialaska.net](mailto:shoag@ptialaska.net) ♦

## World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education

by Moses L. Dirks

The World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education met this year in Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 15–22, 1996. The purpose of the conference was to involve indigenous peoples in the development of their own institutions and programs aimed at meeting the unique educational needs of Native, First Nations and Aboriginal peoples. Also, it was intended to provide an opportunity for people engaged in such educational initiatives to come together and learn from each other's experiences and to explore ways to strengthen the links between education and the cultural well-being of indigenous peoples.

The theme of the conference was "The Answers Are Within Us." It was evident that answers could be found from the elders and young people that were in attendance. The conference was one of the most exciting and educational events that I have ever at-

tended. It provided a week-long program of workshops, cultural events, displays and some opportunities to take organized excursions to various American Indian settings in the area.

We also got to meet with various indigenous groups worldwide.

Groups represented were Maori people from New Zealand, Aborigines from Australia, Native Hawaiians from Hawaii, American Indians and a fairly large Alaskan group.

The workshops were very informative and there was a sharing of similar struggles we, as indigenous people, face as we live our lives in our communities. I was also intrigued by the fact that the problems faced by the other indigenous people were very similar and the frustrations that they face are being addressed in much the same ways. There is progress being made in leaps and bounds by the indigenous peoples of the world in the areas of elementary, secondary and postsecondary education. The respective groups were presenting positive things about indigenous peoples getting more opportunities in schools. Indigenous ecological knowledge is not only being used more and more by the indigenous people but it is being used to teach other indigenous people also. Indigenous materials and historical texts are also being implemented in the curriculum.

Alaska was represented well. Participating in the cultural events that WIPC:E sponsored were Tlingit, Aleut, Inupiat, Athabaskan and Yup'ik people. We all had good fun and just being with all the people who were there was exciting. Gifts were also shared by the people who attended.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative had its own booth and made a presentation. Many thanks go to Dorothy M. Larson, Ray Barnhardt, Oscar Kawagley, John Pingayak, Bernie Alvanna-Stimple, Paul Mountain, Bernice Tetpon and Lolly Carpluk for helping man the booth. At the booth we provided information on the Alaska RSI program and sold quite a few of Oscar's books.

Whenever you get a chance to attend a World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, I would highly recommend it. ♦

## The (Coolangatta) Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education

by Paul Mountain

The purpose of this document is to begin the drafting of an international instrument on indigenous peoples' education rights.

The document was prepared by a task force who met in Coolangatta, New South Wales, Australia between September 24 and October 1, 1993. Their primary purpose at this meeting was to establish a document for discussion and refinement by all indigenous participants at the 1993 World Indigenous Peoples' Conference: Education that was held in Wollongong, NSW, Australia the following December.

The task force which was established at that time believes that for all indigenous nations to be represented in an international instrument on indigenous peoples' education rights, time must be spent on debating the nature, purpose and contents of such an instrument.

The statement lists several issues of indigenous peoples' rights to education. A fundamental statement is, number one, that indigenous people have the right to be indigenous; that includes the freedom to determine who is indigenous, what that means and how education relates to indigenous cultures. Another statement is that land gives life to language and culture. Feelings and thoughts of indigenous peoples toward the land forms the very basis of their cultural identity.

The conclusion for the statement at this time is:

We, the indigenous people of the world, assert our inherent right to self-determination in all matters. Self-determination is about making informed choices and decisions. It is about creating appropriate structures for the transmission of culture, knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of each of our respective cultures. Education for our communities and each individual is central to the preservation of our cultures and for the development of the skills and expertise we need in order to be a vital part of the twenty-first century.

Paul Mountain and Bernice Joseph hosted a discussion of Alaska Native concerns for the international instrument during the Association of Interior Native Educators' Third Annual Conference on August 8 and 9, 1996 in Fairbanks, Alaska. There will also be a discussion on this at the Alaska Native Education Council Conference scheduled for October 14 and 15, 1996 in Anchorage, Alaska. Input from these and subsequent presentations will be presented to the general body of the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference: Education which will be held in Hawaii in 1999. It is our hope that this will ensure that Alaska has adequate representation in the drafting of this important international instrument.

For further information contact Paul Mountain at (907) 279-2700 (w). ♦

## UA Establishes Rural Educators Preparation Partnership

At their June 1996 meeting the University of Alaska Board of Regents authorized establishment of the Rural Educators Preparation Center. UA President Jerome Komisar recommended this action following a year of work by the Rural Educators Preparation Partnership committee (REPP).

Komisar announced formation of the REPP committee at the Association of Interior Native Educators 1995 conference, and asked the committee three questions: how to improve rural students' access to UA's teacher education programs, how to improve UA's in-service assistance to rural districts, and how UA should respond to the Alaska Department of Education Task Force on Certification as it considered alternative means of certification. He also asked for their ongoing oversight of UA's implementation of their recommendations, and the REPP meetings will continue next year. UAF Chancellor Joan Wadlow chairs the group of five UA and nine public representatives, four of which are Alaska Natives and most of whom have extensive experience with rural Alaska education.

At monthly meetings between December, 1995 and the following May, the REPP soon identified the rural school child as the "client" for their discussions. In reaching the initial conclusions and recommendations, the REPP members used existing information and collected new ideas from a broad range of people involved in strengthening education. Reports on rural and Native education from state and national sources were examined as were recent reports from external evaluators and models of effective university-school partnerships elsewhere in the country. Based on these recommendations and on

their belief that children learn best from teachers who reflect the students' culture and values, REPP clarified that increasing the number of outstanding administrators and teachers who are Alaska Native in the state's schools was their highest priority outcome.

REPP discussions returned many times to several major values critical to student and teacher success. REPP members agreed that when incorporated into education programs, these values effectively promote relevance to communities and student success:

- program administration must be modeled on partnering and shared governance;
- communities are critical educational resources and must be involved in curriculum development and instruction and through the school boards, in-staff hiring;
- Alaska's school curricula must include Native languages and culture;
- pre-service and new educators require mentoring by outstanding, practicing professionals in many varied real-life field placements;
- instruction must incorporate diverse learning styles as well as current and future educational technologies; and
- high academic quality must be maintained to ensure teacher and student mastery of standards pertinent to program goals.

The REPP committee discussed



*Cecilia Martz offers public testimony before the Rural Educators Preparation Partnership Panel in Anchorage February 9, 1996. Thelma Saunders listens in the background.*

many other issues. Unlike the critical values listed above however, they did not particularly seek or achieve consensus on:

- where or how programs should be delivered, as it depends on the student and community situation and the program content;
- whether preparation for certification should be independent from earning academic degrees; and
- how the University would draw on existing, system-wide resources to meet partnership commitments.

Based on review of many letters, documents, verbal presentations and discussions—both formal and informal—with interested individuals and groups outside the REPP members, and on extensive discussion and documents drafts, the REPP recommended that UA establish a center for development of partnerships and innovative delivery of education programs incorporating REPP values. The center is associated with the UAF campus and the director reports to Chancellor Wadlow. Recruitment for the center director is in process. Success in the director's position requires understanding and commitment to REPP



Center values and effective functioning in rural communities and in K-12 and higher education systems, as well as other attributes and skills.

For further information about the REPP committee or a list of the

members, please call Ann Secrest, office coordinator for Chancellor Wadlow at 474-7112, or April Crosby, assistant to President Komisar, at 474-5922. ♦

## Iditarod Area School District Utilizes E-Mail

by *Bob Kuhn*

Five years ago when I started using our school district's electronic mail (e-mail) system, I was not too taken with the idea of this impersonal method of communicating. Something would be lost without the face to face contact, or even the sound of a voice over the phone. But this is an old story, one I'm sure most of you have heard many times.

Somewhere in the past few years, I began to see beyond the argument of, "where is the human factor in communicating." I have come to see that rather than decreasing this human factor, the use of e-mail in our district has brought our staff and students closer together. Being as large in area as our school district is, having the capability of communicating with peers 200 miles away has allowed staff members and students to work together as if they were in the same building. Staff and students alike are beginning to see that a district-wide e-mail system can enhance not only the instruction in the classroom, it can also help teachers in remote villages feel less isolated.

The Iditarod Area School District has been using the software package QuickMail for about five years now. This is our choice but there are numerous others. We chose QuickMail for a number of reasons, not least of which is its very user friendly interface. Functions such as sending, re-

ceiving, and grouping e-mail messages and documents from one person anywhere in our district to anyone else within our district can be done with nothing more complicated than the click of a mouse. All teachers and office staff members have desktop access to QuickMail and we are in the process of giving this same access to our students.

Staff members use QuickMail to share unit ideas, obtain information from the district office, locate materials that have moved around the district and just to keep in touch. The district office uses QuickMail to communicate with school office personnel. This allows for the easy transfer of attendance reports, food reports and all of the other bits of paperwork that flow within a school district.

The most exciting use of a district e-mail system is the way it can be used by students. One student uses it to gather material from other students for the district newsletter she publishes. One teacher runs a math con-

test by sending math problems to students throughout the district and receives solutions via the same method. Students who have moved to another village in the district can keep in touch with friends on a regular basis. The uses are limited only by the imagination.

It must be noted that there are drawbacks to a district e-mail system. First, is the expense. Our messages are transferred over long-distance phone lines, so there are those costs. We have our system set up to send messages at night to take advantage of the lower costs. Second, are the poor phone lines in rural Alaska. Due to lines and equipment that is antiquated, connections are sometimes lost. This can be very frustrating. These are the two major negatives that we have had to deal with.

Electronic mail has changed the way we do business in the Iditarod Area School District. And it has been a change for the better. I can't imagine going to work one day and not having it. You might as well take away my blackboard. Setting this system up in your district is not difficult. All it takes is time, commitment, and someone with the minor skill and energy necessary to set it up. I would be happy to assist in anyway I can.

Happy E-Mailing,

Bob Kuhn  
Iditarod Area School District  
McGrath, AK  
907-524-3232 ext. 240  
rsrck@aurora.alaska.edu ♦



## UAF Native Summit

Nov. 14-15, 1996

**R**ural students  
**I**nitiating  
**S**uccess in  
**E**ducation

### "A plan for the 21st century"

Dr. Shirley Holloway, Commissioner of Education for the State of Alaska, has agreed to attend and participate in the Native Summit. She will lead a discussion on "Accountability for Public Education." This discussion is based on recommendations that were a result of the 1994 Native Summit at UAF.

Rural Student Services is in the preliminary planning stages of the event. The agenda will include audioconferencing to the five rural campuses as well as other rural communities. It is hoped that the rural voice will become a major focus of this event.

Two UAF departments have agreed to focus course work around the event. Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development will take an active role in the planning and follow-up of the Native Summit.

Any questions or requests for information can be directed to JoAnn Ducharme, Director of Rural Student Services, UAF, (907) 474-7871. ♦

## 1996 Native Summit

**R**ural Student Services announces plans for another historic summit of Alaska Natives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

### Summit Goal:

To revisit the 1994 recommendations and develop a plan for implementation.

### Reason:

To gather statewide input that will result in positive changes by Alaska Natives in postsecondary education.

### Who will participate:

ALL interested individuals including people associated with tribal administration, postsecondary education, scholarship foundations, rural education, Alaska Native programs and alumni.

### Recommendations from the 1994 RSS Native Summit

- Mentorship program for Alaska Native students, staff and faculty
- All students take one course on Alaska Native cultures as part of the core curriculum
- Mandatory interview process and orientation for educators upon hire
- No cuts to College of Rural Alaska, rural campuses or distance delivery programs
- Incentives for faculty and programs to work effectively with Native students
- Develop a dissertation support fund on Alaska Native or related issues
- Institute an Alaska Native experts guide of both traditional and contemporary citations
- Establish UAF as a statewide center for Alaska Native research and studies
- Utilize small residence halls as transitional houses for students who desire a Native environment and support
- Accountability of programs for secondary schools preparing students to be more academically prepared for college level courses

### Telephone

(907) 474-7871 FAX: (907) 474-6619 E-mail: fnjkd@aurora.alaska.edu

**Welcome back teachers  
 and students—Best wishes  
 for a successful 1996-97  
 school year!**

## 10th Annual ANEC Statewide Conference

The Tenth Annual Alaska Native Education Council (ANEC) Statewide Conference will be held at the Egan Convention Center on October 14 and 15, 1996.

The conference theme is "Community Involvement Equals Quality Education." Conference participants may use AFN Convention special rates for travel and accommodations. Most participants attend the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention that follows this education conference. ANEC conference activities include review of AFN resolutions that pertain to education of Alaska Natives, forums to hear and voice educational issues with Alaska Department of Education, Board of Education, Commissioner of Education, Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and school superintendents. Other activities include election of ANEC executive board members, presentation of awards for Native educators, elders, parents, students and education programs. For more information about this education conference, contact Charles T. Kashatok at (907) 543-4853 or Luanne Pelagio at (907) 272-3399. ♦



## AISES Corner

### American Indian Science and Engineering Society

School is starting for 1996–97 and AISES secondary and elementary chapters will be starting in the schools of North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic, Bering Straits and Nome Public Schools. School districts in Interior Alaska will begin planning the introduction of new AISES chapters. Students will plan Village Science Application projects to enter in district and regional science fairs.

AISES in Alaska has a busy calendar:

The AISES Chapter Liaison teachers will meet in Kotzebue, September 6–8, 1996. The teachers will represent the North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic, Bering Straits and Nome Public Schools school districts. They will meet with two Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (Alaska RSI) directors, the Alaska RSI/AISES coordinator, the Inupiaq regional coordinator and three Village Science Application coordinators. AISES Chapter activities, Village Science Application projects and science fair criteria at state and national levels will be topics for discussion. Plans for the Arctic Regional Science Fair will be finalized.

Alaska RSI is sponsoring an Arctic Regional Science Fair sometime during the end of November or the beginning of December 1996. Students (K–12) in North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic, Bering Straits and Nome Public Schools will be invited to enter and participate in all activities.

The best projects from the fair will be entered in the AISES National Fair in Albuquerque, New Mexico April 3–5, 1997.

UAF/AISES students are preparing to raise funds for travel money to attend the AISES National Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, November 14–17, 1996. Some Alaska RSI staff and village teachers are planning to attend the AISES National Conference, also.

AISES Region I includes AISES college and university chapters in Montana, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming, Oregon, Canada and Alaska. The UAF Chapter of AISES is planning to host the Region I conference on the UAF Campus in conjunction with the Festival of Native Arts, March 6–8, 1997.

If you need more information or would like to be included in any of the events listed above, contact Claudette Bradley-Kawagley, Associate Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks, P.O. Box 756720, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775. ♦

## Inupiaq Regional Report

by Elmer Jackson

The Kiana Elders Council is sponsoring the 1996 Inupiat Illitqusrait Summer Camp for the youth in Kiana. Youth, ages eight through ten, held their camp session July 29–31 and August 1; a total of nineteen students attended the first camp session. Youth, ages eleven through thirteen, held their camp session on August 5–8; a total of sixteen students attended this session. A camp session was held on August 12–15 for ages fourteen on up. A cook, a fishing person and an assistant were hired. We have had nine people—mostly young—volunteer their time to help out during the camp sessions.

Camp activities included preparing and setting a net for salmon, building fish racks and cutting and hanging fish to dry. Other activities included

survival skills, gun safety, target practice, hiking, storytelling, games, berry picking and prevention activities. The students were also involved in day-

to-day chores such as packing water, gathering wood and keeping the camp area clean.

Moose hunting season is now open and the caribou are returning to the Kobuk area, so we went boating and hunting for game. The campers also had fun activities and were able to carve, draw and paint in their free time.

The Kiana Traditional Council and the Kiana Elders Council thank the volunteers and workers for making the Inupiat Illitqusrait Summer Camp a success. Hopefully, we will have teachers, scientists and Alaska RSI people in future camping sessions. Hint, hint . . . . ♦

## Yup'ik/Cup'ik Regional Report

by Barbara Liu

The Yup'ik/Cup'ik regional report will focus on the memorandum of agreement (MOA) activities that have been started in area schools through the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. Between January and May 1996, MOAs were negotiated with Kuskokwim Campus, Bristol Bay Campus (BBC), Lake and Peninsula School District and Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD). The allotted funds support these educational agencies' efforts to collaborate with our initiative, Yup'ik/Cup'ik Ways of Knowing.

Four Native professionals are implementing activities in their areas that are directly or indirectly related to the Alaska RSI. Cecilia Martz, a Cup'ik associate professor at Kuskokwim campus, is interviewing elders and plans to go statewide with an audioconference course called "Yup'ik/Cup'ik Practices in Philosophy and Religion" (ANS 275, fall se-

mester). This class fulfills the multicultural requirement for new teachers. Another class Professor Martz will offer is on "Alaska Native Language and Culture" (ANS 320, spring semester) using television and audio conference to present this course. Students can enroll where there are transponders for Live Net such as LKSD, LYSD, Yupiit and Bristol

Bay. She is also doing cross-cultural communication workshops and inservices throughout the school year.

Esther Ilutsik, of Bristol Bay Campus/Ciulistet Research Group Curriculum Project oversees the agreement with BBC and plans to host a fall meeting to demonstrate the process of collecting indigenous knowledge from elders. The Ciulistet Research Group has developed a method of collecting indigenous knowledge that has been very effective. The group is composed of elders, teachers and university professionals, sometimes including students within each of the village sites they work with. The group meets two times during the school year consulting with elders on specific topics, including evaluation, integration and method. The Ciulistet Research Group shared this process of collecting indigenous knowledge in conjunction with the LKSD 5th Annual Bilingual Education conference titled "Yup'ik World View II" from March 6–8, 1996

in Bethel. Their afternoon presentation provided a mini-version of their usual three-day, two-night intensive meeting. The Ciulistet Research Group presenters were elders Henry Alakayak, Sr. and Anuska Nanalook of Manuquutaq, Lena Ilutsik and Adam Caiggluk of Alaqnaq, Mary K. Active of Tuyuryaq, two certified teachers Sassa Peterson and Ina White both of Dillingham City Schools, bilingual specialist Evelyn Yanez of Southwest City Schools, teacher trainer Esther Ilutsik of Bristol Bay Campus/Ciulistet Research Group Curriculum Project and Dr. Jerry Lipka, Associate Professor with University of Alaska. The fall meeting, in conjunction with their MOA, will be held in Dillingham. The focus will be on training and sharing different kinds of teaching methodology with certified Native teachers. The Ciulistet team will look at a plan for integrating different units they've developed within the past five years into the classroom.

Frank Hill, first and only Native superintendent of our vast region, will oversee the MOA for Lake and Peninsula School District with assistance from Greg Anelon. This district serves fifteen schools and the three Alaska Native cultural groups—Yup'ik, Athabascan and Aleut—that border within their geographic location. Superintendent Hill designated Greg Anelon, a certified Native teacher, to assist in documenting Yupiaq Ways of Knowing as well as identifying other certified teachers who can do the job. He is especially interested in the Ciulistet process after a year and a half of developing long range plans for the district in which there is an emphasis on incorporating a strong cultural strand into their curriculum. The MOA will enhance their mission and although somewhat behind in getting started they are committed to being involved.

Charles Kashatok with Lower

Kuskokwim School District administered part of the memorandum of agreement funds involving the Ciulistet Research Group Curriculum Project at LKSD's 5th Annual Native Educators Bilingual conference, which he also coordinates. Charles faxed invitations to other district schools with Yup'ik/Cup'ik bilingual staff to attend the conference offering to reimburse travel, lodging and registration cost. Representatives of school personnel from Bering Straits, LYSD, YUPIIT and IDITAROD participated, along with a troop from LKSD. The presenting team of elders and teachers from the Bristol Bay area conducted their five-hour workshop in Yup'ik.

"Yup'ik Ways of Knowing" is our region's initiative this year so congratulations to all our four leaders in carrying out this challenging respon-

sibility. Quayana!

In closing, I have the privilege to answer to a teasing cousin who happens to be one of the leaders who knows what I'm going to say next because I talk so slow in Yup'ik. Well, part of my ancestors are "Cup'ik" from QISSUNAMIULLRET (old village near Chevak) and "Yup'ik" from KAYALIVIGMIULLRET (old village near Newtok) and QINARMIULLRET (old village near Tuntutuliak). Tua-llu, Cup'ik and Yup'ik are modern terms for the original people and language of the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Nushagak Delta with a few coastal villages (Hooper Bay, Chevak and Mekoryuk) speaking the Cup'ik dialect and all others are Yup'ik dialect.

*Tua-i-ngunrituq!*

Barbara Liu ♦

## Southeast Regional Report

*by Andy Hope*

**T**he Southeast Native Educators met in Juneau on June 5, 1996 and elected interim officers. Jackie Kookesh of Angoon and Isabella Brady of Sitka were elected co-chairs. Other officers include Aaron St. Clair, Rhonda Hickok, Toni Mallott, Ruth Demmert, Mary Jean Duncan and Phyllis Carlson. The next meeting of the Southeast Native Educators will take place in Sitka on October 4, 1996.

The State Department of Education and the Alaska Science Consortium (ASC) sponsored a three-day workshop in late June to update the Tlingit Chapter for the ASC "Native Uses of the Seas and Rivers" handbook. The goal of the workshop was to draft a science unit based on Tlingit knowledge, addressing science standards (state and national) and using appropriate teaching and assessment strategies. Teachers from Sitka,

Angoon and Kake participated. The revised chapter will be presented during a Native Science Curriculum workshop scheduled for October 2-3, 1996 in Sitka. Other workshop presentations will include a draft of Tlingit Math and Calendar Curriculum Guides. The workshop will be open to all teachers. Teachers from the Southeast MOA schools (Chatham and Sitka) are especially urged to attend. ♦

## Aleut Regional Report

by Moses L. Dirks

This summer has been exceptionally busy for me. What makes it difficult is to know that fishing is going on and I get to work in an office setting. The Aleut Region is a large, diverse region with three culturally and traditionally different groups: the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands, Kodiak Islands and Chugach regions. As most of us know, the customs, languages, geography and traditions are a little different, though the Aleutian Islanders could converse with the Kodiak Islanders.

The activities that I was involved on within the last two months were time consuming, but interesting. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, with facilitators Colleen Matt and Robin Dublin, conducted an Alaska Project WILD Rural Facilitators Training on May 30–June 2. Elmer Jackson, Inupiaq Regional Coordinator and Amy Van Hatten, Athabascan Regional Coordinator and I were invited to attend this training of facilitators for teachers in rural schools. We were invited as cultural advisors, and were asked to provide information about our regions. Valuable input was provided in the training, especially by the respective regional coordinators. The facilitators' main objective for this training was to design Alaska Project WILD workshop formats to suit the unique conditions of Alaska cultures and village schools. The other objective included techniques for integrating local traditional knowledge with the teaching of Western wildlife biology concepts. We were also fortunate to have one elder, Mark Jacobs, Jr. from Southeast Alaska, attending the workshop. He provided valuable information on Southeast Alaska. Mr. Jacobs was not only well versed in the history of Alaska Natives, he also proved to be knowledgeable in the area of Native subsistence and the implementation of the Alaska National Interest Lands

Conservation Act (ANILCA).

June 15–22 I attended the World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Alaska RSI staff gave a presentation on the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. I attended various workshops provided at the conference.

July was an exceptionally busy month for me. It started off with contacting Aleut village entities in the Aleut Region to schedule and sponsor elders for the 2nd Annual Elders Conference to be held this year at Unalaska in conjunction with the Celebration and Rededication of the Holy Ascension Orthodox Cathedral. The proposed meeting dates are September 12–17. Elders from the Aleutian and

Pribilof Islands are expected to attend this event. During the meetings, elders will have the opportunity to voice their concerns about regional, social or educational issues. The first annual meeting of the regional elders under the Alaska RSI will be conducted during this time.

Also, during July, I started looking for a sea mammal science kit that I started some time ago when I was still at Alaska Pacific University (APU). Apparently it was being used by the Alaska Science Center at APU. The sea mammal science kit was designed in hopes of integrating local knowledge together with Western science. The science center coordinator at APU mentioned to me that since they will be closing the center, if I wished to have the kit to work with, I could do that. This kit is not complete, so I will be periodically working on it to incorporate additional ideas. If anyone would like to assist in the development of the kit on integrating indigenous science knowledge, please contact me at any time.

Lastly, I would be more than happy to hear from any of you if you have any questions or concerns surrounding the Aleut region, Alaska RSI project. My telephone number is (907) 274-3611 or fax (907) 276-7989 from 8–4:40 p.m. ♦

### 46th Annual Arctic Science Conference

American Association for the Advancement of Science, Arctic Division

*"Shaping an Unpredictable Future: Science and Communities"*

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For more information contact Jack Kruse, Conference chair or Mary Killorin, Conference coordinator:

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phone: (907) 786-7724  
fax: (907) 786-7739  
e-mail: [auaaas@acad2.alaska.edu](mailto:auaaas@acad2.alaska.edu)  
<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/iser/aaas.htm>

## Athabascan Regional Report

by Amy Van Hatten

In May, I was invited to attend the “Project WILD” educational program planning workshop at Hatcher Pass with teachers from rural Alaska. I reminded the coordinator and participants that I had only my personal experience to go on, and could not speak on behalf of other Athabascan people. Two other regions were represented by Elmer Jackson, the Inupiaq regional coordinator and Moses Dirks, the Aleut regional coordinator. I consider it a common courtesy for any organization or individual to make direct contact with appropriate Native groups when it comes to documenting Native traditions, life styles and ways of teaching, as the Department of Fish and Game did for these workshops.

This summer I attended the Denakkanaaga Elders conference, the Cross-Cultural Teacher Orientation Program and the Academy of Elders (the latter two were held at Old Minto.) All of these events were motivational for me as far as my duties as a regional coordinator responsible for data collection, ideas for developing a roster of traditional ways of knowing and documenting self-regulating processes on which indigenous people have relied on for many generations. Elders share their way of life with prestige, depth and resonance. They speak with courtesy and respect to the land, animals and of objects which make up the respected areas they still live in. Some of their insights are from memory and some from still being able to enjoy the richness of staying in a fish camp.

Many speak with reverence of the everyday activities in their local environment during different seasons, with hopes of passing on that indigenous knowledge to the younger generation and their educators. At the same time mentioning that they are not trying to impose their will over non-indigenous people, but they see and understand why our Native chil-

dren are confused about their own identity, interest in school, sense of belonging, sense of community or other relationships to their homelands.

During the two camps, it was with much satisfaction on my part to watch numerous rural Native teachers, elders, university staff, school administrators, guests from foreign countries and other consortium members light up with excitement as they demonstrated their new skills in making something with their own hands. Many of the Native educators couldn't wait to return to their village to teach what they had learned.

At the camp site many skills were accomplished and learned through the gathering of birch bark, spruce roots, willow and willow bark, medicinal plants, cutting and smoking fish, learning Native songs, dancing, Native spirituality, respect for the land and all that it offers to us in order to survive, storytelling, how to use a sweat lodge for healing, how to regain physical stamina during long trips and what foods to take for a lasting energy level, how to read and predict the weather, the many uses of birch trees (last count was up to thirty-two items), how to camp in the wilder-

ness, how to conserve heat in the tent by using spruce branches on the floor, how to make a “cache”, safe ways to store food, discovering new methods of teaching math while knitting geometric designs or flower patterns on yarn socks, how to utilize the entire moose, how to make varied sizes of birch bark baskets and how to make a fish net shuttle along with another instrumental piece to making a real fishnet and using manufactured twine or hand woven willow bark spun into twine for the net.

The list is endless. It's like when you've gone through a growth process and can't wait to share all you have experienced first hand. Through the teacher's and students' elation, it became mine too, and it was like I was discovering these Native ways of knowing for the first time while some were learning it all over again, but with a feeling of doing it better the next time.

Together as indigenous people and educators who learned the western ways of learning and doing things, our hopes are to develop our own educational aids and integrate the western ways of learning with Native ways while letting the Native ways be. Many others speak of indigenous activities in the past tense instead of the present tense. Personally I relate that perception to their not having any personal experience of immersing themselves in the natural environment. As the old saying goes, “It's never too late to learn.” ♦





## Alaska RSI Contacts

### Amy Van Hatten

Athabaskan Regional Coordinator  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Alaska RSI/ANKN  
PO Box 756730  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-6730  
(907) 474-5086  
e-mail: fyav@aurora.alaska.edu

### Andy Hope

Southeast Regional Coordinator  
University of Alaska Southeast  
School of Business/PR  
11120 Glacier Highway  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
(907) 465-6362  
e-mail: fnah@aurora.alaska.edu

### Elmer Jackson

Inupiaq Regional Coordinator  
PO Box 134  
Kiana, Alaska 99749  
e-mail: fnej@aurora.alaska.edu

### Moses Dirks

Aleutians Regional Coordinator  
Alaska Federation of Natives  
1577 C Street, Suite 201  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
(907) 274-3611  
e-mail: fhmd@aurora.alaska.edu

### Barbara Liu

Yup'ik Regional Coordinator  
Box 2262  
Bethel, Alaska 99559  
(907) 543-3457  
e-mail: fnbl@aurora.alaska.edu

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Alaska Native Knowledge Network/Alaska RSI  
PO Box 756730  
Fairbanks AK 99775-6730

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