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Sharing Our Pathways

A newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
Alaska Federation of Natives ◆ University of Alaska ◆ National Science Foundation ◆ Annenberg Rural Challenge

Aotearoa tour participants from Alaska and Canada gather for a photo overlooking Wellington Park in Wellington, New Zealand. Moses Dirks is in the second row, third from left.

Aotearoa (New Zealand) Language Tour

by Moses L. Dirks

The Unalaska City School District gave me the opportunity to visit New Zealand this summer to participate in a language tour and to look at model Maori language revitalization programs to explore forming similar language classrooms here in Unalaska. With that in mind thirty-two of us, mostly language teachers from Canada and Alaska, went on a two-week language tour of New Zealand, July 15–29, 1999.

In Unalaska there are few Qawalangin who speak the language and the people here are very aware of the status of the language. They want something done so that it can be revived back to the way it was in the past. The number of speakers in Unalaska are very small; those who speak the Qawalangin dialect of Aleut are not young (65 and over). There are approximately ten fluent speakers in the town of Unalaska that speak

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(continued from front page)

Unangax̂. It is those speakers who will be vital in the revitalization of the Unangan language.

The Maori are the leaders in language renewal among indigenous peoples of the world. In just sixteen years, the Maori of Aotearoa (New Zealand) have reversed the spiraling loss of language and turned it into one of renewal. The Maori have shown that it is possible to rescue a dying indigenous language if the will and determination of its remaining speakers is there.

In July 1999 our group, several of whom were aboriginal Elders, from across Alaska and Canada spent two weeks visiting various Maori language programs to observe and interact with Maori people. In doing so, I developed a deep respect for the Maori for taking a big step in preserving their language. Every place we visited we heard Maori spoken and sung among the little children, the teachers, the parents and the Elders. It was a lesson in what can be achieved with programs of total immersion in language and culture.

Dr. Verna Kirkness, our tour guide, has been following the Maori language renewal program for over ten years. She says that each time she returns she sees the progress that is being made. Back in 1981, the Maori started a program they called Te Kohanga Reo, meaning "Maori language nests", for children from birth to five years of age. In the Te Kohanga Reo the children are immersed in the Maori language and culture while in the care of Elders and other family members who are fluent speakers of the language. It is reported that as of 1991, Te Kohonga Reo was producing 3,000 young speakers per year.

In addition, we visited several Kura Kaupapa Maori philosophy schools. As in the Te Kohanga Reo, these schools use Maori language for instruction and follow Maori tradition, protocol and customs in all aspects of their educational activities. During our visit to the schools, the Maori were generous in making us feel welcome and did all they could to help us understand their language programs.

The Maori also have developed teacher training programs to help reinforce the teaching of Maori, because there is a strong commitment for the Maori to continue developing these language programs. As another means of increasing the number of Maori speaking teachers, Professor Timoti Karetu, the Maori Language Commissioner, told us of a plan that is in the works to take certified Maori teachers who are not fluent in Maori and provide them with a year of language immersion. The Maori Language Teacher Education Program was another place that was interesting to visit. The teachers were willing to take the time to talk to the group about their programs. In our visits to schools the Maori teachers took us into their classrooms and explained what type of approach worked with the students in teaching Maori. All communication is conducted in Maori. We also had a chance to interact with students and the ones we talked to enjoyed school and were willing to learn.

One of the biggest challenges has been to develop quality teaching resources to accompany the Maori language curriculum. Initially, twenty-two percent of the Ministry's learning material budget went to the production of resources for Maori–medium education and the work in this area is on-going.

The Maori acknowledge the wholeness of life in which there is an intangible presence—a God, a higher power, the Creator. They believe in the spiritual relationship of all things—human, animal and nature. They display many of the same beliefs and values that we do here in Alaska as indigenous people.

Museums were another avenue that is used in teaching about the

Maori culture and history. The museums were well equipped with resources and displays that were set up to convey various aspects of Maori history.

What stood out most about this trip was the amount of resources that were available to the Maori. They have their own universities and teacher colleges that prepare teachers for classrooms. The number of speakers in Maori is phenomenal and they are fluent in their language. The schools are full of volunteers that help in classrooms to make sure that the students learn Maori. The support system for the language revitalization is working and is getting stronger every year.

After the trip to New Zealand, I felt very encouraged about the possibilities of Unangan language development. The Maori people have worked very hard in reversing the language loss in their homeland and we, as Unangan people, need to do the same with what resources we have today. The Maori people have inspired not only the Unangan people but many indigenous peoples of world. They are the true leaders of language revitalization. Let us try to model after them in an effort to revitalize our own languages.

The Unangan language has been used for generations in passing on knowledge in the region and that part of Unangan history and tradition should continue. The Unangan community should commit themselves to the revitalization of the Unangan language before it is too late. We have learned English and lived that lifestyle for sometime. It is time that we once again learn about Unangan culture through our own language. I have always believed that it is hard to convey a culture if it can't be described or defined in the host language. What better way to learn about ourselves than to re-learn our language?

AISES Corner

American Indian Science and Engineering Society

by Claudette Bradley

The AKRSI/AISES initiative had a successful summer. Five camps operated in three regions. The Fairbanks AISES Science Camp was held at Howard Luke Camp with Athabascan and Iñupiaq middle school students. The Kodiak AISES Science Camp was held in Afognak. Pribilofs Camp was in St. Paul. Southeast Alaska had two camps (one girl and one boy camp) at Dog Point in Sitka.

The AKRSI and AISES staff extend their deep appreciation for the hard work given by the staff in the camps. We especially want to thank Roby Littlefield and Betty Taylor in the Sitka Camps, Karin Holser and Debbie Bourdokofsky in the St. Paul Camp, Teri Schneider for coordinating the Afognak Camp and Claudette Bradley for coordinating the Howard Luke Camp. Furthermore, we want to acknowledge the fine work of Dixie Dayo, Alan Dick, DeAnn Moore and Travis Cole for their supporting roles in the camps.

The AISES initiative of AKRSI is ending its fourth year with six regional science fairs and one statewide fair. The teachers in each region are meeting via audioconference to plan for the fairs and recruitment of students. All fairs will have Elders judging projects for their usefulness to village life and the culture of the region. The teachers and scientists will judge projects for their scientific method and clarity of presentation. Having two sets of judges is a unique feature of our science fairs.

We are looking forward to having rural students participate in the science fairs and we extend our invitation to the students who attended our summer camps and have science projects to enter into the regional Native science fairs.

Arctic Reg. AISES Science Fair '99
Kotzebue, Alaska
December 6–8, 1999

Fairbanks AISES Science Fair 2000
Fairbanks, Alaska
January 20–22, 2000

Statewide AISES Science Fair 2000
Birchwood Camp (near Anchorage)
January 30–February 2, 2000

Kodiak AISES Science Fair '99
Ouzinkie, Alaska
November 3–5, 1999

AISES Annual National Science Fair 2000
St. Paul, Minnesota
March 5–6, 2000

The Southeast, Pribolofs and Barrow Regional Science Fairs do not have dates at this time. If you are interested in more information contact Claudette Bradley at 907-474-5376.

Lessons For All Schools

by Ray Barnhardt

As we go about the work of implementing the locally-oriented rural school reform strategies that serve as the basis for the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI) and Rural Challenge, it is important that we be mindful of how Alaska fits into the larger school reform agendas that are underway on a national level. To what extent can we learn from what is happening elsewhere in the country and what lessons can we contribute to school reform efforts nationally? The good news is there is a lot of convergence in the direction of school reform initiatives at the state and national levels, in part because the lessons from Alaska are having an impact on policy-making and funding nationally. The bad news is, we have a long way to go to achieve the levels of improvement in schooling outcomes that are at the heart of the reform agendas at the local, state and national levels.

One avenue AKRSI is contributing to the national agenda on school reform is through the data collection and analysis that we are doing as part of the National Science Foundation's effort to track the impact of the systemic reform strategies that are being funded through its Educational System Reform division. AKRSI is being implemented in all geographic regions of the state and is focused specifically on Alaska Native students in small rural schools. The current reform initiatives encompass 70% of Native students in rural Alaska who are located in 20 rural districts directly involved with AKRSI, most of which serve a student population that is over 90% Alaska Native. Following is a summary of some of the results that we have submitted to NSF as part of our annual report on the impact of the AKRSI.

Lessons from Rural Alaska

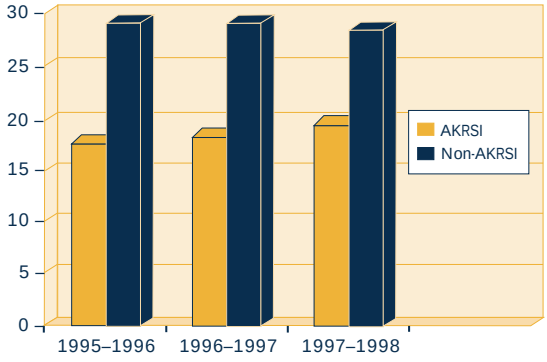
AKRSI is working directly, through MOAs, with 20 of the 48 rural school districts in Alaska. To gauge the impact of the AKRSI initiatives, data comparing the performance of the AKRSI and non-AKRSI schools on measures selected from the DOE summary of school district report cards has been included in the Year Four Annual Report. The data indicates that the cumulative effect of increasing the connections between what students experience in school and what they experience outside school appears to have a significant impact on their academic performance. The initial indicators of the effects of the first three years of implementation of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative follows:

There has been a net gain between AKRSI partner schools over non-AKRSI rural schools in the percentage of students who are in the upper quartile on eigth-grade standardized achievement tests in mathematics. There has also been a corresponding decrease in the percentage of students who are performing in the bottom quartile.

At the eleventh-grade level, AKRSI students are moving out of the lower quartile in math performance at a greater rate than non-AKRSI students, while non-AKRSI students are entering the top quartile at a slower pace than AKRSI students, though both groups are showing signs of improvement.

- The student dropout rate for grades 7–12 in AKRSI partner schools declined from a mean of 4.4 in 1995 to 3.5 in 1998, whereas the dropout rate decreased from 2.6 to 2.4 in non-AKRSI rural schools in the same time period.
- The number of students enrolled at UA campuses from rural districts involved with AKRSI (20 districts, 133 communities) increased by 21% between 1995 and 1998, while the enrollment of new rural students from non-AKRSI rural districts in Alaska (28 districts, 120 communities) decreased by 7% in the same period.
- Of the 12 major math, engineering and science fields of study available at UAF, the percent of Alaska Native student enrollment has increased in seven fields (math, biology, geology, civil engineering, electrical engineering, fisheries,

Eighth grade mathematics performance.
Percentage of students in top quartile on CAT-5.



and wildlife biology), stayed the same in two (chemistry and mining engineering) and decreased in three (physics, mechanical engineering and petroleum engineering). It is noteworthy to point out the substantial increase in the enrollment of Alaska Native students in the life/biological science fields (including fisheries and wildlife biology), since that is consistent with the interests shown by younger students as they select topics for developing a project to enter into a science fair. It also reflects strong practical considerations, since the increases in Native enrollments are in those fields for which job opportunities are most likely to be available in rural communities. In addition, these are the majors that are most consistent with the areas of expertise that have been at the heart of the survival of indigenous cultures and traditional knowledge systems.

The results of the first three years of AKRSI indicate that the integration of Native knowledge, ways of knowing and world views into all aspects of the educational system can have a significant beneficial impact on the academic performance and aspirations of Alaska Native students. These strategies are now reflected in the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, which have attracted interest in rural schools and communities throughout the U.S. as well as in indigenous communities elsewhere in the world. Similar results are being reported from other rural schools around the country participating in the Rural Challenge reform effort, where the community–school link is at the heart of the reform strategy.

Reinforcement from the National Level

The most recent indication that the results of these large-scale, rural school systemic reform initiatives are beginning to have an impact at the national level is the major policy initiative announced on October 13th by Richard Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education, entitled "Schools as the Centers of Community." Secretary Riley outlined the following points as the focus of this new federal initiative:

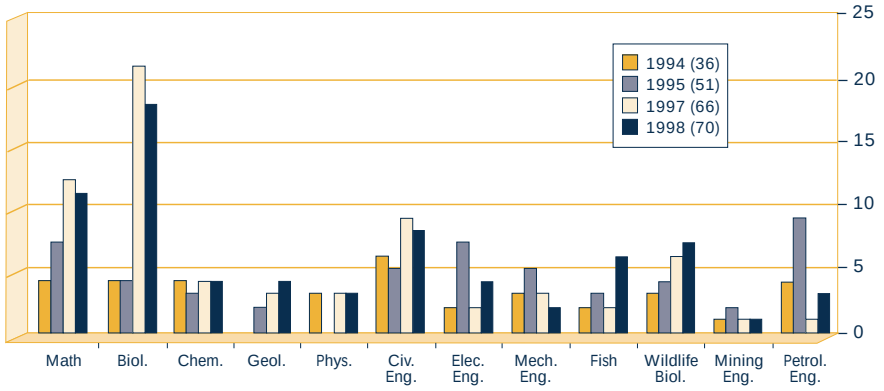
1. Citizens need to be more involved and engaged in planning and designing schools.
2. We need to build smaller schools rather than "schools the size of shopping malls." Research supports smaller schools. Rural schools that have resisted consolidation deserve a closer look as a model that all schools should aspire to.
3. We need to build new schools that serve the entire community through multipurpose use at all hours throughout the year. It makes no sense to build costly buildings that are closed for two-thirds of every day and one-quarter of every year.
4. We need to look at every community as a living classroom to help students find new pathways to learning.

The "shopping mall" approach to schooling has not produced the academic or economic benefits that its bigger-is-better proponents espoused. Any gains associated with the mega-schools have come at the expense of personalized relationships in the classroom and disassociation from the families and communities being served, both of which are strengths of small rural schools.

Rural schools in Alaska have clearly demonstrated that they can provide strong educational programs for the students they serve. Many have begun to close the achievement gap with their urban counterparts. They are doing so with an educational approach that capitalizes on their strength as small scale institutions and on the rich educational opportunities in the surrounding community.

While schools in rural Alaska have a long way to go to adequately address the many unique issues they face, the current signs of progress indicate that now is not the time to pull the rug out from under them, as some recent legislative proposals would do. The state has a constitutional responsibility to provide equitable educational opportunities for all its citizens, but that does not mean all schools must look alike or that equity can be achieved with the same levels of funding for each school. Instead, we need to focus on what is working, locally and nationally, and continue to build a strong community-oriented educational system that can accommodate the diverse needs of all segments of the state's population. The return on the state's investment will be many-fold and the lessons we learn along the way will be of benefit, not only to rural schools, but to all schools.

Percentage of Alaska Native student enrollments at UAF in math/science majors (1994, 1995, 1997, 1998)



Revitalizing Harmony in Village and School Relationships

By Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley and Dixie Dayo

The relationships between Alaska Native people and the schools have often been adversarial. This may be due to Alaska Natives' mistrust of the outside educational system and its practitioners. For too many years the schools did not acknowledge the different ways of knowing and ways of making sense of this world extant in the villages. Instead, another way of making a life and living was espoused by the newcomers.

After making a visit to Alaska in the 1880s, Sheldon Jackson approached the United States Congress for money to educate Alaska Native people. The money he received for this purpose was very limited so he approached religious organizations to establish schools, many of which were associated with the church-run orphanages that sprung up after the viral epidemics. In their minds they were doing God's work, with the very best of intentions. However, they were also carrying out the assimilation policies of the times, in which Alaska Native students were to lose their Native language and ways of making a living. After many years of experiencing this type of education (under both church- and government-run schools), Alaska Native people began to recognize that schooling in pursuit of the American Dream was a largely unattainable goal made up of empty promises. As a result of this bifurcation of purpose, many of the teachers who served as the purveyors of the new knowledge through the schools never became a part of the community in which they taught. This split has contributed to the debilitation of the villages to the point where many villagers have abdicated their educational responsibilities with an attitude of "Let's leave things alone, they know better." In this way, the educational system has failed Alaska Natives and, in turn, Alaska Native people have contributed to that failure. So, what can be done to overcome this legacy of adversarial relations between school and community?

In the not-too-distant past, when newcomers came into Alaska Native communities, they were welcomed as visitors and made comfortable. The Alaska Native people shared their food, homes and knowledge about the surrounding flora and fauna. They shared the arts and skills of hunting, trapping and survival in a sometimes harsh environment. They found some of the early newcomers had left behind their individualistic and competitive world in search of another way of making a life and a living—one compatible with Alaska Native peoples' inclinations. These newcomers grafted themselves to the lifeways of the community in which they settled and became a part of it. They allowed any feelings of superiority to dissipate in the wind. However, they were followed by another group of people some of whose goals and motivation were driven by a different mindset—that of ambition and greed to gain land and take natural resources for attaining riches.

The original host-visitor relationship was broken asunder and the Alaska Native people found themselves thrust into smaller and smaller pockets of land differientiated by artificial boundaries and restrictions. This was now a conqueror and conquered relationship. The Native people found themselves struggling for survival in their own land. They found themselves subjected to new laws, values and institutions. They experienced new diseases and poverty, as well as the language, arts and skills that were now being taught to them. The Native peoples' perception of harmony in life practices which upheld the recognition that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts was disrupted. This is a sad commentary for a people who were once self-sufficient and practiced a spirituality that edified this harmonious way of life and making a living.

More than a century has elapsed and it is time to reexamine the relationship between community and school in rural Alaska. This recognition was brought about by a recent trip to New Zealand of Alaska Native educators and our subsequent participation in the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) held in Hilo, Hawaii in August. At every Maori *marae* (meeting house) that we visited in New Zealand, the protocol of welcoming the visitors was performed. On the first day WIPCE, the Hawaiian people performed a traditional welcoming ceremony for the 2000 guests who came to the Islands to attend the conference. All of these were awe-inspiring

experiences that engendered a feeling of being a part of the host community and confidence in knowing what would be expected of you as a visitor.

The Maori *marae* and many of the Hawaiian settlements have become bastions of indigenous spirituality, philosophy, identity, language and values. Because these ceremonies are so steeped in spirituality, there is a feeling of respect for place, people and all that they have and stand for. These are places where real teaching and learning can take place because they are working for the good of the community with spirit and feeling.

. . . appreciation should be accorded those Native educators who have chosen to obtain a higher education to acquire a teaching certificate. Those who return to the village should be treated with a similar welcome, in a manner that is well endowed with love, care and nurturing to help them become successful teachers.

Why don't Alaska's villages do the same for incoming administrators and teachers? It is time we take the initiative and get involved in providing a more holistic education for our children. This can only happen when we change the adversarial relationship between the village and school. We must realize that we cannot expect the school to raise our children. This has been happening for too long and the result has been a school that is too often a battleground between teachers and students, as well as with the parents and villagers. The time is ripe for putting the statement, "It takes a whole village to raise a child" into practice. Let us briefly suggest how a process like this might begin. It is up to each of you to do the rest.

No matter where Alaska Native people come from, they have had a way of welcoming the *allanret*—the visitors. We should revive these practices, starting with welcoming the principals and teachers who come to the village to help in the education of the children. They are with us the greater part of the year and spend much of their waking hours with our children. So it is only fair that we make them feel welcome. These welcoming ceremonies must include local speech makers. The Alaska Native speakers should include (in general terms) what is expected of the administrators and the teachers. The principal and teachers can respond by briefly stating what their philosophy of education is, what and how they meet the expectations of the villagers and to ask where they may need help themselves. It is important that everyone come to mutual terms on what can be done to improve the education of the village children.

The same appreciation should be accorded those Native educators who have chosen to obtain a higher education to acquire a teaching certificate. Those who return to the village should be treated with a similar welcome, in a manner that is well endowed with love, care and nurturing to help them become successful teachers. There should be no expressions of jealousy or alienation shown toward these individuals. Villagers should allow the spirit to act as the mediator to elevate these Alaska Native people who have taken the risk of failure, suffered through times of depression or bewilderment, confronting insensitive administrators and faculty and experience financial hardship to gain access to the profession of teaching. Alaska Native educators have a willingness to excel and they know the village situation well—thereby earning our support.

These acts of harmony and compassion contribute to the healing process on all sides. Villagers need to participate in board meetings to clarify any questions that arise, let the participants know what is being accomplished to meet village expectations and what needs further work. This must be done with honesty and in accord with Alaska Native values. Compassion, cooperation and teamwork have always been the hallmark of Alaska Native hospitality. This must be resurrected to function as an organism with all its parts working together for the good of the whole village. It is admirable to note that this is already being done in some villages. This is where synergy really begins to kick in with each part working for the good of the community and thus making it stronger than its individual parts. The ways of Alaska Native people may become the model for the future. *Tuaii, piurci.*

UAF Spring Course Offerings For Rural Students and Teachers

The following courses will be available during spring semester, 2000 through distance education to students in rural Alaska. Contact your rural campus or the Center for Distance Education for information.

CCS 602	Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights (Lolly Carpluk)
CCS 612	Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Oscar Kawagley)
ED 603	Field Study Research Methods (Jerry Lipka)
*ED 616	Education and Socio-Economic Change (Ray Barnhardt)
*ED 631	Small School Curriculum Design (Ray Barnhardt)

**course meets state multicultural education requirements*

Southeast Region

by Andy Hope

I'm looking forward to year five of the AKRSI/ARC project. I am recommending consolidation of several initiatives into a curriculum project for the Southeast region. I believe that the Axe Handle Academy, the cultural atlas, AISES, the Academy of Elders and the subsistence-based curriculum can all support development of the *I Am Salmon* curriculum.

The *I Am Salmon* curriculum project is being coordinated by One Reel in Seattle. *I Am Salmon* is a multi-disciplinary, multi-lingual, multicultural, multinational curriculum designed to develop a sense of place (in one's watershed), a sense of self (in the Circle of Life) and an understanding of how they are connected according to the developers, Judith Roche and Jane Cordry Langill. Participants include teachers from Japan, Russia, Alaska, British Columbia and Washington. Many of these teachers participated in a curriculum design and planning workshop in Leavenworth, Washington, Memorial Day weekend, 1999.

The general purpose of *I Am Salmon* is for sixth-grade students to explore the natural history of their watershed by documenting the history of wild salmon streams near their communities and share that information with other students around the Pacific Rim. The children will work on this project throughout the 1999–2000 school year, beginning in mid-October, 1999, when they received a packet of resource materials compiled by David Gordon, a science writer who currently works for the Sea Grant program at the University of Washington. David worked with a number of other consultants in preparing the *I Am Salmon* workbook, which he describes as a multidisciplinary program designed to lead individuals and groups of students on in-depth explorations of local watersheds. A watershed is a gathering place, a region defined by hydrology—the way water flows over, under and through the earth. Within a watershed, snow, rain, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands and groundwater aquifers are all links in an intricate chain. The unifying theme of *I Am Salmon* are the six species of Pacific Salmon, their ties to watershed habitats, dependence on natural cycles and roles in ancestral and modern cultures in nations throughout the northern Pacific Ocean. By following the cycle of migrating salmon, students can learn lessons about the larger themes of life—birth, death and transformation—and an understanding of ones place, both in local watersheds and the world.

Teachers and students will also interact via the Internet through the school year. One Reel had plans to post an *I Am Salmon* website in October. A number of sixth-grade and middle-school classrooms from AKRSI/ARC school districts in Southeast and Southwest will participate in the project. Technical support for classrooms will be provided by Richard and Nora Dauenhauer, Claudette Bradley and the cultural atlas technology team of Micheal Travis, Arlo Midgett and Jimmy George.

Four *I Am Salmon* curriculum teams have organized as follows:

- Blatchley Middle School, Sitka School District, Patty Dick, sixth grade science teacher and team leader
- Angoon School, Chatham School District, Phil Miscovich, team leader
- Floyd Dryden Middle School, Juneau School District, Angela Lunda, seventh grade science teacher and team leader
- Kake Middle School, Kake School District, Rick Mills, sixth grade math teacher, team leader.

Andy Hope, Southeast regional coordinator, interviews Elder Lydia George.

An Interview with Elder Lydia George

Interviewed by Andy Hope, transcribed by Roby Littlefield, August 1999

They call us Raven Beaver Clan of Angoon. Deishitaan from Deishu Hit. The crest we carried with us was the Raven. I was told, back in time, that the beaver led our family into Angoon so we started using the beaver crest also.

I started working with the elderly people during the land claims suit as an interpreter and translator. I worked with many clan leaders to help document their land use and campsites. They told me the names and stories about all these places. I was the only English-speaking young person who was willing to do this for them.

Later my husband, Jimmy George Sr., was nominated as president of the Tlingit and Haida Council; then I was elected to the Central Council by the people. I learned to write Tlingit from Connie Naish and Gillian Story when they were staying with us, so that came in handy when I did the original BIA enrollment from Angoon. When I did the enrollment for T & H, I finally began to get paid for my work.

The Forest Service hired me to put an information office together for them and that was the first time I put the Tlingit names next to English names on a map. At that time I also did research on the Angoon Clan Houses (also documenting the older community houses that were destroyed in the 1882 Navy bombardment.) That gave me the background (training) to work with JOM. I worked for them twenty years teaching cultural arts in school. That is why the governor gave me the Arts Award.

I was trained in California to write grants as a Vista Volunteer and that helped to further document the Angoon cultural history and arts.

I am very happy to be here at Fish Camp this summer. I'm so thankful that I listened to my Elders because whoever has a project, they come to me for advice, and I can tell them what I have learned from my Elders.

Over the years my whole family has gotten into documenting traditional knowledge. My husband bought a reel-to-reel and began recording memorial parties and ceremonies; now my son, Jimmy Jr., is transferring it to CD-ROM. He's doing it on his own with no help.

The cultural atlas work I've done with Tom Thornton and the university will now be available for teachers to use in schools. It is important for our children to learn their history.

It's important for children to also learn traditional values at Fish Camp. It is the only place where most of them can learn to hear and speak Tlingit, learn independence, how to survive off the land and be safe in the wilderness. It's the only place today where a child is taught old-fashioned respect for nature and Elders.

When the children heard the adventures of Kaax'achgook, they learned clues about the science of navigation by the sun, moon and stars. If this man had not studied he would not have made it back to Sitka.

Now my granddaughter is studying the tide for her science project. She heard a story here at Fish Camp that made her want to study the tides.

The Beaver Canoe, S'igeidi Yaakw, belonged to my Uncle Kaa Tlein. He was a young man and was out hunting when the U.S. Navy bombarded our village. They destroyed all the houses, the winter food and all the canoes were smashed. Only S'igeidi Yaakw was undamaged because it was gone. It was the only canoe left to feed the whole village that winter.

Many years later the canoe was tied up on the beach where it would float part of the time. The people had begun to use the gravel on the beach that looked like marbles *neex*. They would put it in the smokehouses, around our houses and on the road. Soon there was none left on the beach so rocks began to stick up out of the sand. It only took a little breeze to move the boat, making it hit on that rock so that the bottom of the canoe badly cracked. The whole community was in sorrow and pain because of the history of the canoe when they discovered the crack. They had to hire the opposite clan to help put the canoe to rest. They burned the canoe up as if it was human and blew the ashes to the Four Corners of the world.

The people realized that it was still important to find balance—you can't just take from the land. They should have scrapped the old gravel up and put it back on the beach. The tides would then take it, clean it and spread it out until the next time it was needed.

My granddaughter understands from stories how important the tide is. I wish teachers today could use our stories to teach like we used to do.

Aleut/Alutiiq Region

Kodiak Island's Alutiiq Language Regeneration Project

by Olga Pestrikoff, Teacher, Old Harbor School

> *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever does.*
>
> —Margaret Meade

I am an Alutiiq from Afognak, a parent, a grandparent, a teacher and a community-minded citizen. I am committed to the effort of regenerating our heritage language. Like many other indigenous cultures, our language requires strategic attention soon. We are not alone in this dilemma, and I feel as though I have something to offer in this cause.

Alutiiq Language Programs in the Kodiak Region

Over the years Kodiak Island schools have implemented a program called Cultural Days that has evolved into Cultural Week. This is time set aside from the routine academic process to study local, place-based educational endeavors. Classes have included cold weather survival, subsistence gathering, local foods preservation and preparation, craft classes like beadwork and basket weaving and different types of carving. The classes are culturally significant and tied to the people and community, drawing in family participation. Vocabulary is taught within the context of the activities. The school staff is already in the school. Most community support is on a volunteer basis unless tribal councils have this program as part of their mission.

The Alutiiq Museum offers Alutiiq Word of the Week through the media including the *Kodiak Daily Mirror*, various newsletters, the internet, faxes to villages and over the radio station. The Word of the Week is put into context within different sentences and includes background information. Craft classes that reflect the museum display items are offered through a registration and user fee system and incorporate teaching of Alutiiq vocabulary.

The Kodiak Area Native Association spearheads a joint effort with other organizations in planning and implementing a summer youth camp. Students from the villages and the city of Kodiak come together in camp to explore cultural issues and participate in cultural activities in a bonding experience. They also learn and practice Alutiiq vocabulary. Activities include crafts, gathering of foods, talking circles, discussions and presentations on issues like drug and alcohol prevention, family planning, water safety, tool making and use, first aid training, story telling and more.

The Association of Native Educators of the Alutiiq Region originated through the school districts' partnership with AKRSI. Currently this association is working on publishing a series of posters, in the Alutiiq language, of plants indigenous to the islands. The Association also writes thematic units using both Alaska Content and Culturally Responsive Schools Standards. Units on edible plants, driftwood and sea lions are nearly ready for publishing. With this study students can learn the Alutiiq vocabulary.

The group also sends representation to the Native Educators' Conference that precedes the Alaska Bilingual/Multicultural Education and Equity Conference in February of each year. This has been beneficial in networking and generating potential ideas for classroom use.

The Academy of Elders Science Camp brings Elders, teachers and students together in a remote camp setting. Students work on science projects with Elders teaching Alutiiq as part of each project. The Elders also practice their language and teach it to those present just by talking.

Old Harbor Programs

The Alutiiq Word of the Day is introduced during the daily opening of the school. For five days in the fall of 1998, Elders were recorded on language master cards. One of these cards is then played over the intercom daily for one week. Listeners repeat the word in the classrooms along with the two students who are making the announcements with the principal. The tribal council pays for the Elders' time. The principal, a teacher's aide and one teacher rotate in facilitating and assisting with the recording and management of the project.

Language classes are offered to all students, kindergarten through junior high. Elders teach for thirty min-

utes daily totaling two-and-a-half hours with a half hour for prep time. The IEA parent committee bought the sound systems that are used to tape classes for classroom review.

During the appropriate seasons, seal and duck hunting classes have been offered. They integrate gun safety, geography, survival, meat preparation, presentation protocol for giving meat to Elders culminating in an actual hunting trip. Students are able to complete the whole process because they learned the steps in the classroom. The teachers are community members with the certified teacher assisting in the classroom throughout the four-week unit. The community teachers are paid by the tribal council for their time.

Some Alutiiq vocabulary is taught within the context of arts and craft classes. The IEA committee buys supplies for the classes taught by an IEA paid teacher's aide in the school. The tribal council also buys supplies for classes that are open to the public and offered as cross-generational opportunities through the Elders and Youth Center. In both places the tribal council pays for the time of the teachers who are community members. They are assisted within the classroom by the certified teacher, but are on their own in the Elders and Youth Center.

Singing is performed in Alutiiq with the introductions in English. The school began the initiative to have students learn the dances when the IEA parent committee hired people from Kodiak to come out and teach the songs and dances to the students during Alutiiq Week for several years in a row. A teacher led dancing that had all students practicing from grades K–8 at least once per week over the course of the school year. Now the community needs to think about what can improve this program.

I have worked with Elders who teach language classes in my first- and second-grade classroom at Old Harbor School. After listening to the joys and frustrations expressed by both the Elders and teachers, I initiated a joint effort constructing an eight-week Alutiiq language curriculum project for the fall of 1999 in K–8 classrooms at Old Harbor. Our intention was to come up with a scope and sequence following the subsistence seasons, laying the groundwork for a three-year curriculum project. In the middle of implementing the unit, we take one day to build the next eight-week unit using the same framework. The initial plan was to continue doing this over a three-year period. We did not get a chance to finish it because of timing and community crises. I heard about the Bread Loaf Summer Institute on Indigenous Languages in Juneau and decided to attend that as a way to help me finish the unit.

Regenerating the Alutiiq Language

In order for us to save our language we need to adopt a strategy and address it from all fronts. We need to implement programs within the community as well as keep the school programs going. In the language revitalization efforts that I have studied, I found they all began through grassroots efforts.

Recommendation

- Continue language programs in the schools.
- Continue arts and crafts programs with an Alutiiq language component directing the focus.
- Continue Alutiiq dancing in the community, available to all, and include an Alutiiq language introduction and learning opportunity.
- Initiate preschool programs using Alutiiq immersion modeled after the Maori Kohango Reo and other second language programs.
- Implement master/apprentice programs for individual instruction.
- Implement a policy that requires any person applying for scholarships or funding to demonstrate their involvement in one or more efforts at learning Alutiiq.

Future of the Alutiiq Language

These programs are specific models available for our use. Our language is in danger—it is in our hands and every one of us has an obligation to act. Nobody is going to run in to save us or our language. People in our region have begun several grass roots efforts aimed at helping ourselves. The language regeneration effort is an opportunity we have undertaken in a better, more effective manner.

We can choose to leave things as they are and watch our language die. Some of the fun things that we practice will still be here but not in the natural context and therefore will become disembodied. Children will learn, but could miss the underlying education that goes along with dancing, singing, subsistence foods, etc. Parts of our culture will become like pieces in a museum, just there to look at with no real meaning. We can choose inaction and help our culture to die or we can take a proactive stance in a unified strategic manner through some of the efforts presented above. We can keep delaying our decisions, but please understand that we are all on alert as to the dangerous state of our language.

Remember how activists from all over the country took up the fight to save the spotted owls in the forests of the Pacific Northwest? Eagles, seagulls and sea lions are protected as well. But we do not have any environmentalists rising up to save the Alutiiq way of life or language—it is up to us. If we do not act now we run the risk of not having a culture left for future generations of Alutiiq people. We cannot afford to let this happen, especially after the Alutiiq people have been here for many thousands of years.

We must be proactive in saving our language. Let's get started!

Iñupiaq Region

Traditional Knowledge, Environmental Assessment, and the Clash of Two Cultures

by Richard Glenn, Barrow, Alaska

The following paper was presented to the Minerals Management Service, Western Region Meeting, Park City, Utah, August 1999

Native American people have, since the time of the first European contact, struggled with the idea of sharing a storehouse of raw information, truisms, philosophies and ways of life with the outside world. This storehouse, wrapped in a big blanket and named by the outside world as "traditional knowledge", has been obtained (as in any culture) over time by observations of nature, trial and error, dogged persistence and flashes of inspiration. In cultures without a written history, such as North Slope Iñupiat culture in Alaska, knowledge is passed person to person through social organizations and individual training, as well as through stories and legends.

The Iñupiat culture is based on knowledge of the natural environment and its resources. Our foundation is knowledge of the arctic tundra, rivers, lakes, lagoons, oceans and food resources. Knowledge of snow and ice conditions, ocean currents and weather patterns and their effects on natural systems are necessary for navigation, finding game and locating shelter and each other. This knowledge has value. First, to share with each other and pass on to our children and second, (if desired) to pass on to those outside of the Iñupiat culture.

To someone unfamiliar with the Iñupiat culture or the Arctic environment (such as a youngster or an outsider), the storehouse of information must seem infinite and inaccessible. In addition, stereotypes abound among ourselves and in the eyes of outsiders. Legends of the "hundred different terms for snow or ice" perpetuate the mystery. Most importantly, those wishing to learn the Iñupiat culture or environment, there is a stigma: bad experiences too numerous to count begin by good-faith sharing of traditional knowledge with outsiders. These range from simple plagiarism to exploitation and thievery. Legends and stereotypes abound. Such experiences have led many Iñupiat people to first ask "Why share?" And, even if this challenge has been answered sufficiently, an equally difficult challenge remains for both sides: "How to share?"

Why Share?

Why do Iñupiat share traditional knowledge? Despite the stigma, our community is proud of a long history of productive, cooperative efforts with visiting researchers, hunters, travelers, scientists, map makers and others. We share when we consider others close enough to be part of Iñupiat culture and share when it is in the best interest of a greater cultural struggle.

Experts Sharing With Each Other

The question of "why" is always easy to answer when two individuals are sharing equally and the joy of discovery takes place on both sides. Examples of the Iñupiat hundred-year history of cooperation serve as good models: the wildlife biologist and the whaler, the nomadic traveler and geologist, the archeologist and the village Elders. This two-way exchange has often worked when a given researcher has been around long enough to be considered "one of us" or at least has displayed to the community that he possesses some common values.

Sharing for the Greater Good

For a more locally important reason, we share traditional knowledge when we believe it will lead to preserving the land, its resources or the Iñupiat way of life. This reason has prodded us to work hard with regulatory agencies and other organizations to develop policies, draft environmental impact statements or offer specific knowledge of the environment, wildlife or cultural practice.

Sharing as a part of Education

A third reason exists: pure instruction. Like a teacher to a student, our Elders and experts teach the rest of our community in all facets of traditional knowledge. We share to perpetuate our culture. How does one become involved in this kind of sharing? The answer is simple: become a student. However, this can take a

lifetime—pairing with a given expert through years of learning. Chances are that the teacher is learning, too. This is the method most commonly used by Iñupiat people to transfer knowledge with each other. Iñupiat culture has many vehicles to allow this kind of instruction to take place. However, this method faces challenges due to changing culture, loss of language and other factors.

How to Share?

How can an outsider partake in vehicles of sharing traditional knowledge? Choose one or all of the criteria: an exchange among experts, become part of an effort that is of value to the Iñupiat or remain in the community and become a real student. Any other method risks lack of context, data gaps from abbreviated efforts and other problems.

Funding exists in many agencies for programs that elicit traditional knowledge. These programs can be found from NSF, NOAA and MMS. Recently this has drawn praise from outside quarters, as it demonstrates that the government has validated traditional knowledge. Even so, we are still struggling with the very agencies that have given traditional knowledge some credibility. Why is this? In many instances the goal of eliciting traditional knowledge is a short-term project for an effort that might necessarily take a lifetime. A common problem many agencies face is they try to gather traditional knowledge in non-traditional ways. They hold public meetings, offer copies of documents for comment or rely on whatever political leadership happens to be in place.

Another vehicle in vogue for government agencies is contracting with Native organizations. Native tribal organizations, profit and non-profit corporations and rural and local governments all represent some aspect of a Native constituency. So, because the groups have some legitimacy in attempting to be the bridge between traditional knowledge and the outside world, a contract is developed. The contractor must somehow assimilate, document and contribute traditional knowledge. Thus, what should take years of heart-to-heart collaboration between experts, a whole army of local energy focused on a single issue or years of tutelage under a suite of instructors must now be completed before the contract deadline (usually a period of weeks to months). Here, the government can wash its hands of the issue. It looks appropriate; it's in the Natives' hands. Consequently, the Native organization, hungry as it should be for grants and contracts from the "feds", offers to carry the obligation. Again, contract and project timelines become the targets, and we collect what we can while we can. Quality may suffer, content and context as well.

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Knowing that change happens slowly and that agencies can only do so much, it is reasonable to assume that what is presently occurring will continue. Meetings to assess traditional knowledge will undoubtedly go on. Knowing this, there are a few more cautions to those interested in documenting traditional knowledge, learning about the environment without reinventing the wheel and working with Native communities on regionally important issues.

Choose the Forum with Care

A meeting's attendees must be matched to the issue. When expertise is really needed, it should be stated. Stereotypes will allow any agency to assume the expertise is there. There is a scene from the movie *On Deadly Ground* where the leading actress (an Asian woman playing a Yup'ik) jumps on a horse to the surprise of Steven Seagal's character. He asks, "You can ride a horse?" to which she answers, "Of course, I'm Native American!" A comical analogy, but not far from the mark.

Don 't put your Eggs in One Basket

Check sources. Stated another way, the most talkative person may not be the most knowledgeable. Ours is a culture of consensus. Agreement is mandatory on nearly every item passed as traditional knowledge. If one person stands alone, he may be an expert or he may be wrong.

Given the size of the task, it is easy to run away from documenting traditional knowledge for use by others, even for our own reasons. For many like me, it can be an intensely personal endeavor. Still, such documentation will continue—by Iñupiat as well as by outside groups. Our culture is changing and some day we may be learning traditional knowledge using the same techniques employed by those who are outside looking in. We may be learning of Iñupiat traditional knowledge as if it belonged to others. Just as today, in many places, we are learning Iñupiat language as if it were a foreign language. As long as we are pledged to the task, we should look past the requirements of this contract or that mandate and remember the quality of information—time-tested and true. With everything changing, it is a valuable reference plane. If it is not where we are going, at least it is where we are coming from.

Athabascan Region

Deg Xiq'l Xinatr'Iditl'ghuzr (Let's speak Deg Xinag)

by Beth Leonard

A Deg Xinag language gathering/cultural camp was held in Shageluk on September 18–24, 1999. The Iditarod School District, the UAF Denaqenage' Career Ladder Program, and Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc. collaborated to fund and organize this event.

Elder Marie Dementoff demonstrates caribou tufting to student Kelly Workman.

The first three days of the gathering focused on teaching and learning the Deg Xinag language using immersion sets. We are very grateful to our Elder teachers Hannah Maillelle, James Dementi, Katherine Hamilton, Mary John, Agnes John, Edna Deacon and Mary Deacon. Language learners who participated included adults and high school students from Shageluk, Anvik, Grayling and Lime Village. On the first day, Betty Petruska, Mary Ellen Kimball and Ray Collins led an immersion workshop modeling a number of different activities (using Upper Kuskokwim) which were then practiced using Deg Xinag. Other activities during the three days included preparing breakfast and lunch, checking a fishnet and making fish ice cream. During these activities, speakers were encouraged to model and give directions using only Deg Xinag (which worked very well!) George Holly led a song and storytelling workshop for the high school students, teaching them a Deg Xinag welcoming song he had composed with several Elder speakers.

Students pack moose meat up the bank to camp.

Dogidinh! (thank you) to Angela Bain of the Iditarod School District for handling all the logistics and making most of the travel arrangements for this event. Special thanks to Evelyn Esmailka, principal of the Innoko River School for allowing use of the school facilities and Agnes and Allen John for use of their fish camp.

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Village Science: Flying in Vertigo

by Alan Dick

When a pilot becomes disoriented in the clouds, it is possible for him to fly upside-down, believing he is right side up. This is vertigo. How does a pilot in vertigo reorient? The forces of a plane in an inside loop can make the bottom of the plane feel "down" even when its nose is pointed towards the ground. The pilot needs to pay attention to his instruments, not just the feeling in the seat of his pants.

Similarly, technology has come to rural Alaska so rapidly that sometimes we lose our horizon in terms of anticipating long-term impact on our quality of life. Culturally we are changing at speeds approaching Mach 1. Are we safe or are we in vertigo without a horizon to guide us? What technology should we accept? How should we use the technology we do incorporate? Where are our instruments?

As I have watched technology first creep, then rush into the villages, the adaptations of the people have been amazing. A man piloted a boat across many miles of open ocean from the mouth of the Yukon to Nome using his boom box to navigate. He tuned the radio to KNOM, then pointed the boom box parallel with the direction of the boat. As long as he was on course with the antenna parallel with, not perpendicular to, the signal there was no music. When he veered off to one side or the other, the signal increased, and he heard KNOM loud and clear. Following the silence of his boom box, he arrived in Nome. This is an example of ingenuity at work in adapting the technology to a beneficial use.

How do we determine what is beneficial and what may be detrimental? What benefits do we derive, for example, when we purchase a satellite dish that will bring fifty-two channels into the house? Do we need fifty-two channels? Do we need two? Or do we purchase a dish because it is available and is more convenient than reading, conversing or working outdoors? How about the four-wheelers that take us from one end of the village to the other in minutes; should we therefore ride rather than walk?

Science and technology blends inextricably with social, spiritual and ethical concerns. Do we dare ask the proper questions? Do we dare respond with more than limp efforts to appease our need for convenience? Is it too late? Who will differentiate between right and wrong, convenient and inconvenient? If we do this without Elders and a link to the past, we will certainly become even more disoriented. Why don't we rely on the Elders as our instruments?

There is wisdom in going slowly, walking instead of riding, visiting more, going out in the woods or tundra often, doing things the way we used to and positioning ourselves to do what is right regardless of the cost.

New technologies can lead us into vertigo if we blindly accept every innovation because it is more convenient, if we do what is easy rather than what is right. To not make a decision is to make a decision, for the rush is already on . . . Mach 1 and accelerating.

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