



# 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 ♦ Annenberg Rural Challenge

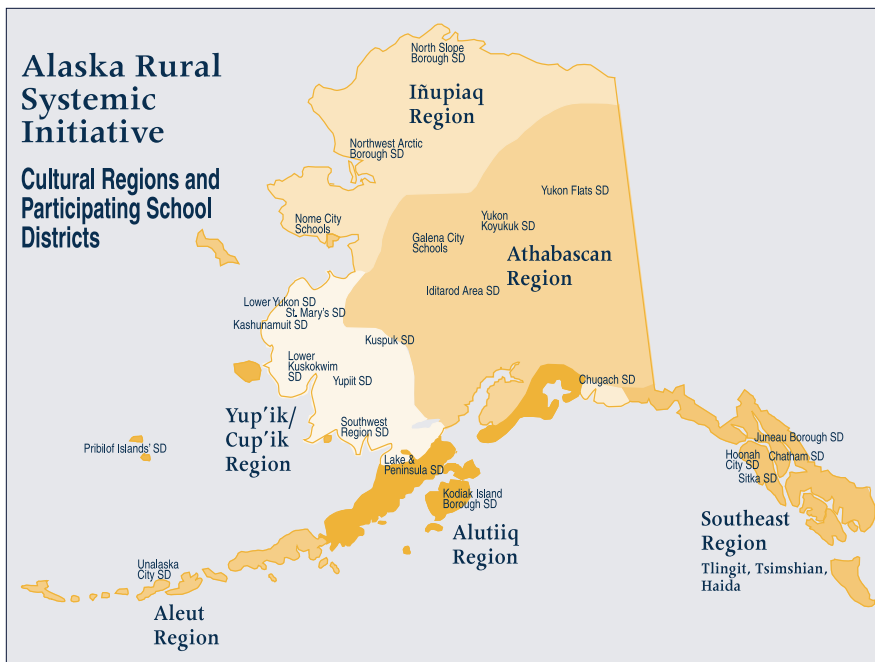
## Rural Alaska School Districts: Who is in Control?

*Frank Hill, AKRSI co-director and retired superintendent*

Most of rural Alaska's schools and districts are populated by Alaska Native students. School boards are elected by and from residents of the district, resulting in mostly Alaska Native-majority boards. With this fact one would assume that the Alaska Natives of the region would have little to worry about concerning whether their local culture and language would be a strong, if not dominant, facet of the local schools' curriculum and instruction.

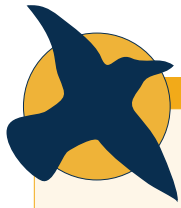
Given the fact that few licensed administrators and teachers are Alaska Native, or even Alaskan-born, the assumption above is not a safe one to make. At the present time there is not one Alaska Native school superintendent in Alaska, only a handful of Alaska Native school principals and

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## Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative

### Ray Barnhardt, Co-Director

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
ANKN/AKRSI  
PO Box 756480  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6480  
907-474-1902 phone  
907-474-1957 fax  
e-mail: ffrjb@uaf.edu

### Oscar Kawagley, Co-Director

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
ANKN/AKRSI  
PO Box 756480  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6480  
907-474-5403 phone  
907-474-1957 fax  
e-mail: rfok@uaf.edu

### Frank Hill, Co-Director

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

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The Alaska Native Knowledge Network  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
University Park Building  
1000 University Avenue  
P.O. Box 756730  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-6730  
907-474-5086 phone  
907-474-5615 fax  
<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu>  
e-mail: fyankn@uaf.edu

Newsletter Editor: Dixie Dayo  
fndmd1@uaf.edu

Layout & Design: Paula Elmes  
paula.elmes@uaf.edu

*(continued from front page)*

less than six percent of all teachers are Alaska Native. Over 80% of Alaska's newly-hired teachers continue to come from out of state.

Since so few school district superintendents and administrators are from Alaska, or are Alaska Native, they are often unfamiliar with the cultural and environmental conditions of the districts they administer. To the extent that we tend to teach and administer the way we were taught, in most cases rural Alaska school districts with Alaska Native school boards and student populations are run just like Anywhere, USA. Add to this situation the extremely high turnover rate of teachers and administrators in rural schools, where in some cases you literally have to start all over again every year or two, we often end up repeating the same mistakes over and over again. I don't fault these professional educators alone because lacking strong direction from the local school boards they will do what they think best, even when they know it is not, because they have only their own experience to draw upon. Recent State of Alaska improvements in professional educators' licensure requirements begin to address the cultural relevancy issues noted above. However, the full effect of these improvements will not be realized until all teachers and administrators have been re-licensed under the new system.

If the local school boards do not have definite and strong policy statements concerning budget development and approval processes, relevant curricula, teaching practices and materials, school calendar considerations, teacher/personnel hiring/performance effectiveness reviews and staff development preferences, the administration will often carry out and operate the district with little if any input from the governing body of the district—the school board. It is the professional duty of the administration to make sure that at least the letter of

the law is met in school operations. There are few, if any, school laws or regulations that require school administrators to pay attention to the local culture, language or environment in the administration of schools and districts. State laws are designed to allow for variation to take place on the local level. Schools and professional educators have a technical language and jargon of their own that is often confusing and mysterious to the general public. Alaska education laws and regulations are no less technical or confusing.

Many Alaska Native school board members will not dispute policy or personnel recommendations made by their administration, assuming that the administrators are the professionals in these matters. In addition, members of many Alaska Native cultures do not, or will not, publicly disagree with others even if they have other opinions. Yet the school board is ultimately responsible for the academic success of their district's students. Perhaps one of the causes of the lingering fact of low academic achievement of Alaska Native students is due to the lack of assertiveness of local school boards regarding budget, policy, instructional program and personnel matters. Who knows the most about local needs: local members of the school board or the administrator from Outside?

Perhaps a program to train Alaska Native school board members to more fully realize their legal responsibilities and to actually take policy control of their districts should be developed. Of course, not all school boards would need this training. It is my understanding that the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) has developed an accountability model for school boards, but I am not sure what level of training or participation rural Alaska Native school boards have had in this accountability model. Maybe a supplementary funding program could be developed to assist AASB and the

local boards in implementing this school board accountability program?

As a facet of Alaska Native self-governance, I believe that control of education matters is an area that lends itself well to developing a locally-relevant program of instruction with Alaska Native Educators in the classrooms as well as district offices. The long-term effect would reach into many other areas of Alaska Native self-determination. Also, if most of the teachers and administrators in rural schools were Alaska Native, the employment picture of rural Alaska would change considerably. In many villages, the highest paying jobs are held by non-Native, non-Alaskan teachers and administrators. Too often the money earned from those positions goes outside the state with little secondary benefit to the rural economy.

A program could be developed that would train and sensitize new-to-Alaska teachers and administrators to teach and work in Alaska Native villages and schools. Such a program once existed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks where participants were sponsored by their districts to learn about Alaska Native cultures and living and working in small, often remote schools where they would be in the minority. This program was discontinued but I believe that many school districts would pay for their new-to-the-state teachers and administrators to participate in such a program, especially if it were offered on a regional level. Here is another area that could have positive long-term effect on the stability and improved academic performance of Alaska Native students.

Two promising programs are the Rural Educators Preparation Partnerships (REPP) and Native Administrators for Rural Alaska (NARA). These programs sponsored by the University of Alaska have a goal to significantly increase the number of Alaska Native classroom teachers and school

administrators. However, they are both small in scope, with limited budget capacity. These are efforts that should be significantly increased with more funds made available.

Without the elected Alaska Native

school board members exercising their responsibilities as policy-making bodies, not many of the initiatives discussed here will significantly improve the academic performance of Alaska Native students. ✖

## CIRI Foundation Teacher Mentor Project

**F**unding for the Alaska Native Teachers for Excellence, Teacher Mentor Project is provided by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education and administered by The CIRI Foundation, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc., and the Anchorage School District. We are in the second year of our grant.

The goal of the Teacher Mentor Project is to increase the number of eligible and qualified Alaska Native and American Indian teachers in the Anchorage School District, so that by the year 2000 they will comprise seven-percent (210) of all teachers.

We hold seminars and private sessions to assist individuals who wish to apply for teaching positions with the Anchorage School District and other Alaskan school districts or for students in the educational field. They receive assistance with applications, interviewing, resume writing and support services. There is no charge for our services.

### 1997-1999 Highlights

The Teacher Mentor Project had several accomplishments during its first two years of operation. We have assisted 43 Alaska Native and American Indian teachers in obtaining teaching positions with the Anchorage School District, made

172 new contacts with prospective teacher applicants, had 151 participants in the Teacher Mentor Training Sessions and 44 teachers were offered positions with other Alaska school districts.

### Guidebook

The Guidebook for New Alaska Native/Native American Teacher Applicants to the Anchorage School District is available free-of-charge from The CIRI Foundation, 2600 Cordova Street, Suite 206, Anchorage, AK 99503. This book gives suggestions to consider when applying for a teaching position and information on coaching strategies, interviewing skills, telephone contacts and other resources and ideas to assist teachers who are pursuing a teaching career.

Should you need further information, please contact Marilyn Forrester at 907-263-5583 or e-mail [mforrester@ciri.com](mailto:mforrester@ciri.com). ✖

# The Time Is Right to Write

By Dorothy M. Larson

Have you checked out the local bookstore shelves lately? How many Alaska Native authors did you find? Not an over-abundance. But for those who have been writing and publishing, I applaud them. We often find stories written about Alaska Natives by others—stories with qualifiers like “as told to me by . . .” It’s not that these books aren’t well done, it is just time for us to write our own stories—to write the stories of our Elders, our families, our lifestyles, our areas and our recollections. Unique voices will appear among the established voices as more Alaska Natives begin to write and publish.

An Alaska Native writer doesn’t have to write about culture to be valid, even though that is how we are often first identified. Alaska Natives can write on par with other writers, including creative non-fiction, fiction, poetry, technical, memoir, biography and autobiography, journalistic, historical, mystery, drama, spiritual and all other categories of writing styles and genres.

This isn’t meant to be critical of those writers who use their skills to tell another’s story. If it weren’t for them, some stories might not have been told or read. This is meant to encourage and support Alaska Native writers who want to write their own stories.

A recent *Anchorage Daily News* article about Alaska Native writers Diane Benson, Anna Smith, Jeane Breinig and Susie Silook was very enlightening and refreshing. They took the risk in the literary and art world to share their experiences. Their experiences living in two worlds make their writing insightful, powerful and poignant. They bring a special presence through their writing that is not reflected when told through another.

It hasn’t been that long ago since Alaska Natives had their own news-

paper, *Tundra Times*, with Howard Rock at the helm. How we looked forward to the weekly edition of the statewide Alaska Native newspaper with a fervent purpose—one of the finest small newspapers ever published. Though we now have several rural newspapers in most regions of Alaska, these papers are more local in nature and often reprint outside news from other sources. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if there was a paper modeled after the old *Tundra Times* with an Alaska Native editor, columnists and reporters devoted to news important to Alaska Native people?

Recently, I read excerpts from a fiction book written by a former long-time Alaskan. Note “former” long-time Alaskan. Though the book was fiction, there were characters in the book that seemed familiar; one had the same nickname as a person I remembered from my childhood. I felt hurt for the person and their family should they happen to read the book. I chose not to finish the book.

Since I am from the area, I skimmed another book about Bristol Bay on a local bookstore shelf. I leafed through it and got the gist in just a few minutes. It was a feeble attempt by the author to depict the Bristol Bay fish-

ery as the “Wild West” of southwest Alaska. Who wants to read about the antics and parties of “Indians” as this college professor called some of his subjects. It was another book of the recent past that was purported to be fact but disgusted old timers of the area because it was filled with errors. It, too, was written by a former “long-time Alaskan” now living elsewhere. If his book were fact, he should be locked up in some penitentiary this very moment.

A year ago I attended the Sitka Symposium which is considered a writers’ conference. The symposium isn’t a true writers’ conference, but people do write and discuss provocative issues. Authors are present to critique and review manuscripts of participants.

The Mesa Refuge Program asked the Sitka Symposium for their list of past participants in order to solicit applicants for their unique writers’ retreat. The Mesa Refuge Program is a new writers’ retreat in northern California established to provide a place where individuals can come to pay undivided attention to their writing. The program is for established and emerging writers as stipulated by the generous founders.

After much thought, I applied for the retreat on the last day the application could be postmarked for consideration. A few weeks later, I was notified by a public radio message from my daughter (I was out at fish camp) that I had been accepted. In my wildest dreams, I never believed I would be chosen for this opportunity—two weeks by a national seashore with two other writers—a gift of time and space. It was a dream come true.

In the bio they put together, I was called a Native poet and activist in the



Native community because of my past involvement and experiences. The word “activist” was not what caught my eye in my bio; it was that I was called a *poet*. Since 1971 when I first began writing, I called my writing a hobby. When I was a junior-high student, I secretly dreamed of becoming a writer, but never pursued it until I took a course at Anchorage Community College many years later. Over the years I attended a number of university classes and workshops with a couple of renowned poets and university professors. I participated in a number of loosely formed writing groups off and on, more off than on. I continued to call my writing a hobby even though I had a few poems published and read a short story I wrote over the public radio station at home in Dillingham.

When friends read my work, I never knew if they were just being kind to me by telling me they liked it. I returned to writing about a year and a half ago. This class saved my sanity and helped me through a very difficult time in my life. It was then I began to think seriously about writing. I’m not getting any younger and I figured that if I am going to write, I should get serious about it—write more, improve what I have written, study writing and write more.

In September I left for the two-week retreat at Mesa Refuge not quite knowing what to expect. I was introduced as a writer/poet to the other two writers in residence. One resident was writing a book as a result of his work with the *Audubon* magazine. He had four to five publishers waiting for his overdue book. The other was a recent graduate student who started a college geography magazine and became editor and writer. I was the novice, for sure.

A retreat is meant to renew, rejuvenate and inspire. There was no pressure to produce; it was a gift of time. However, past residents have completed books or began new ones at the

Mesa Refuge. This retreat forced me to focus. It wasn’t difficult to do because the surroundings were tranquil and close to nature. At first, I thought, too close. I was only a few hundred yards from the San Andreas Fault! Once I put that out of my mind, the environment, the setting and the ambiance was perfect—so conducive to writing. I came home with a preliminary draft of my book with new and old work to complete and a dream to publish a book of poetry, prose and a few short stories. I am hoping to convince a very talented artist friend to illustrate my book for me. I want to continue work on another project: a cookbook I began collecting recipes for last year. I hope to be able to find a writers’ group where I will feel comfortable in order to share my work and to read the work of others.

Many questions arose for me: How would I get an agent? How would I get published? I still don’t have the answers to those questions but I did revisit my dream of some day becoming a poet, a writer and an author.

And to those of you with a similar dream, I hope you pursue it.

The discovery at the Mesa Refuge that I could allow myself the gift of time (without guilt) to write was a revelation. We must give ourselves precious time and space to devote to our writing. It can apply to any craft we pursue. Learning to discipline oneself is a challenge. We must rid ourselves of the distractions and allow the garbage to escape and the new material to take shape in our minds and hearts. There are Alaska Native writers who write wonderful poetry, children’s stories and who have novels waiting to emerge. These talented writers can and should create their niche in the Alaska and the global literary world.

As Alaska Native writers enter the new millennium, we can denounce the invisibility we have often encountered. Alaska Native’s are a very visible, proud people. We are more than capable of creating a significant imprint—the time is right. ✨

## Dixie Dayo Assumes SOP Editorial Responsibilities

On behalf of the AKRSI staff we would like to express our appreciation to Lolly Carpluk for the contributions she has made as the editor of *Sharing Our Pathways* over the past four years. Thanks to Lolly’s encouragement and vigilant editing, the newsletter has provided a valuable means for educators throughout Alaska to share ideas, insights and practices that are making positive differences in the lives of rural and Native students.

Lolly’s responsibilities have changed to incorporate teaching graduate courses on *Documenting Indigenous Knowledge* and *Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights*. Dixie Dayo has taken over the SOP editorial reins starting with this issue. Dixie, from Manley Hot Springs, has been associated with the AKRSI as a project assistant for three years. She is well equipped to assume the newsletter editorial tasks along with the editorial support, layout and graphics of Paula Elmes. We look forward to many more stimulating issues in which rural educators share their pathways to a quality education. ✨

# Report Released on Alaska Rural Systemic Reform in Education

*Ray Barnhardt, UAF; Jim Kushman, NWREL; Oscar Kawagley, UAF; Beth Leonard, UAF; Carol Barnhardt, UAF; Jerry Lipka, UAF; Sarah Landis, NWREL; Bruce Miller, NWREL and Seven Community Research Teams*

*Below is an excerpt from an executive summary of the final report from a three-year study of rural school reform conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Lab (NWREL) and UAF in cooperation with seven rural communities and school districts in Alaska. The balance of the summary will appear in the next issue of Sharing Our Pathways.*

This report presents the results of a three-year study of educational reform in rural Alaska communities and schools. The research revolves around seven case studies in villages and school districts spanning western, central and southeast Alaska. These are primarily subsistence communities serving Eskimo and Indian students. Each community had embarked on a reform process called Alaska Onward to Excellence (AOTE) that strives to create educational partnerships between schools and the communities they serve.

The study examined how educational partnerships are formed and sustained and how they ultimately benefit Alaska Native students. Trying to understand the systemic nature of educational change was a focal point of the study. In rural Alaska, systemic change means fully integrating the indigenous knowledge system and the formal education system. For rural school districts, this means engaging communities in education—fully integrating Native culture, language and ways of knowing into the curriculum and meeting Alaska’s state-driven academic standards and benchmarks.

Each case study was led by a researcher from NWREL or UAF who worked with a small team of school practitioners and community members who participated fully in the research. The case studies tell what happened as rural schools embarked on a change journey through AOTE and other reform activities, paying

attention to educational accomplishments and setbacks, community voice and the experiences and learning of students. The cases include qualitative and quantitative evidence although hard data on student performance was limited and often inappropriate to the educational goals pursued by communities.

The following recommendations are offered to educators and policy makers based on the study. While directed to the Alaska audience, these recommendations apply in large part to rural schools and communities anywhere in the country.

- ✦ Stabilize professional staff in rural schools.
- ✦ Provide role models and support for creating a positive self-image to which students can aspire.
- ✦ Parent involvement needs to be treated as a partnership with more shared decision making.
- ✦ Implement teacher orientation,

mentoring and induction programs in rural schools.

- ✦ Eliminate testing requirements that interfere with language immersion programs.
- ✦ Strategic planning needs to extend to the next generation or more (20-plus years) at the state and local levels.
- ✦ Strengthen curriculum support for culturally responsive, place-based approaches that integrate local and global academic and practical learning.
- ✦ Encourage the development of multiple paths for students to meet the state standards.
- ✦ Extend the cultural standards and Native ways of knowing and teaching into teacher preparation programs.
- ✦ Sustainable reform needs to be a bottom up rather than a top down process and has to have a purpose beyond reform for reform’s sake.
- ✦ Alaska Onward to Excellence should be put forward as a means (process) rather than an end in itself (program).
- ✦ Form a coalition of organizations to sponsor an annual conference on rural education that keeps reform issues up to date and forward reaching.

These findings and recommendations are discussed more thoroughly in the body of the report. It may be obtained from NWREL or the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies at UAF as well as the ANKN website: [www.ankn.uaf.edu/reform](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/reform). ✦

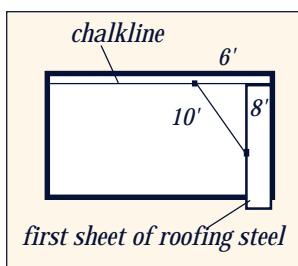
# Village Science: Mastodon Soup?

by Alan Dick

I recently asked a friend for an estimate of how many .30-06 shells I could reload from a one-pound can of 4895 powder. He took a wild guess then we did the math. We found that there are 7000 grains in a pound and 45 grains in a single cartridge. He had estimated 4 boxes of shells (20 shells to a box,) but we found that a pound of powder will reload almost 8 boxes of shells (155 cartridges to be exact.) We did all that with simple multiplication and division—fifth grade stuff.

As a carpenter I had a hard time doing corners on banisters until I learned to first copy, then bisect the angle. When the pieces are cut at exactly half of the intersecting angle they fit like they grew together. Geometry class rose to the forefront when I got out my compass and scratched the arcs, bisected the angle and then adjusted my chop-saw to the precise setting.

As a math teacher and a carpenter, I have to admit that I have never used the Pythagorean theorem to square a building:  $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ . When you do, the answer comes out in feet and tenths of a foot. Accurately converting tenths of a foot to inches just isn't worth the trouble. However, I know that a 3' x 4' x 5' triangle gives a perfectly square corner as do 6' x 8' x 10' or 12' x 16' x 20' triangles:



One of the handiest uses of these triangles comes when installing steel roofing. If the first piece of roofing isn't perfectly square with the build-

ing, the steel will run up or downhill with a two-inch overhang on one end and a conspicuously different overhang on the other. Problems ceased once I started using a 6' x 8' x 10' triangle to set the first piece of steel. I built a 60' x 80' airplane hanger. The roof overhang was consistent within a quarter of an inch from one end of the building to the other.

We used to figure dog feed by the bundle: 40 fish to a bundle, one fish a day per dog, 280 days from freeze-up to break-up, multiplies to seven bundles per dog per winter. Seven times the number of dogs told us how many bundles we needed.

Ratio and proportion? We use it all the time mixing two-cycle gas and oil. Arcs and angles? How else do you set the azimuth when installing a satellite dish? Distance = Rate x Time. We do it constantly when traveling by snowmachine from one village to another.

As we assign importance to math skills let's look around us and find examples that have meaning to the students. Those with no meaningful application should go the way of the mastodon, at least until the students develop some enthusiasm for the principles involved.

Have you ever seen the glaze that comes over a student's eyes after the fourth consecutive long division prob-

lem with two digit divisors? They know all adults use calculators when traveling in that rocky terrain. Even if we do the problem by hand, we're not sure we are right. Train B leaves Boston going 60 mph. Train A leaves Los Angeles going 80 mph. Where do they meet? Ugh, mastodon soup! Let's give students a reason to use math to solve everyday problems. Once they have developed an interest they can more readily move on to advanced math.

Most of us who live in rural Alaska use math on a daily basis but we have an aversion to contrivances with no real life applications. No ivory towers here. They are too hard to heat in the winter. ✨

## Alaska RSI Regional Contacts

### Elmer Jackson

Inupiaq Regional Coordinator  
907-475-2257  
e-mail: fnej@uaf.edu

### Barbara Liu

Yup'ik Regional Coordinator  
907-543-3467  
e-mail: fnbl@uaf.edu

### Amy Van Hatten

Athabaskan Regional Coordinator  
907-474-0275  
e-mail: fyav@uaf.edu

### Andy Hope

Southeast Regional Coordinator  
907-465-8776  
e-mail: fnah@uaf.edu

### Teri Schneider

Aleut/Alutiiq Regional Coordinator  
907-486-9276  
e-mail: tschneider@kodiak.k12.ak.us





# AISES Corner

(American Indian Science  
and Engineering Society)

by Claudette Bradley

I would like to honor Alaska village teachers who have given their support to the Village Science Applications initiative of AKRSI. These teachers have helped with plans for AISES science camps and science fairs, recruited students for camps and fairs, interested other teachers, mentored students doing science projects and chaperoned students entering science fairs. Each teacher has put in far more time and energy than I have room to describe here. My heartfelt thanks to them for their dedication to the Village Science initiative.

The initiative began in 1995 in the Arctic region with four school districts. Deborah Webber-Werle, K-2 teacher from Noatak, provided outstanding leadership including initiating the Arctic Region Professional AISES Chapter. She worked with Alan Dick to bring his Exploratorium to Noatak and worked collaboratively on the AISES science fairs in Kotzebue.

George Olanna, a retired sixth-grade Iñupiaq teacher from Shishmaref, mentored students on a solar power science project that became a grand prizewinner in the Kotzebue fair. He also taught at the Fairbanks AISES Science Camp in '97, '98 and '99.

Ruth Sampson is a bilingual coordinator for the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. Her office is the science fair business center. She has also assisted with budgets, decorating the armory and organizing van transportation.

Kate Thurmond is a fourth-grade teacher in Galena. She developed an inservice workshop for science fair projects and fairs for teachers in the Galena School District. Kate collaborated with teachers to have a Galena Science Fair that preceded the Fairbanks fair. Gordon

Chamberlin has picked up where Kate left off.

Rita O'Brien, a teacher at Ryan Middle School in Fairbanks, assisted in the planning and implementation of the Interior AISES science fairs. She also taught in the Fairbanks AISES summer camps in '97, '98 and '99.

Teri Schneider works full time for the Kodiak School District as an educator on special projects and is the AKRSI Alutiiq/Aleut regional coordinator. She recruited volunteer teachers for the Afognak AISES science camp; collaborated with the Kodiak Native Association to have Elders at the camp and organized the Elders, teachers and scientists to participate as judges at the Kodiak AISES Science Fairs held in Old Harbor in '98 and in Ouzinkie in '99.

Betty Taylor is a teacher at St. Paul on the Pribilof Islands. She collaborated with Debbie Bourdokofsky and Karin Holser on the St. George Stewardship Camp. Betty was also a teacher in the Sitka AISES Science Camp '99.

Roby Littlefield of Sitka has taught in elementary schools and now keeps up with an active family. She maintains the family subsistence camp at Dog Point where she coordinated the Sitka AISES Science Camp '99. She combined Elders and teachers in the camp setting to help students develop science projects.

AKRSI is proud of these teachers and their work with students making science relevant to their personal, cultural and environmental situations. The AISES national educators have commented on the special qualities our students bring to the national fair and the uniqueness of their projects. They encourage us to continue and would like to model their programs after our AKRSI Village Science initiative. The teachers and Elders who have given to the Village Science Initiative is extensive and I may have left out a few names—for this I offer my apologies. ✨

## ALASKA STATE AISES SCIENCE FAIR

The winners of the regional AISES science fairs will participate in the Alaska State AISES Science Fair in Birchwood, 15 miles out of Anchorage, January 29–February 1, 2000. The fair will be held preceding and concurrent with the Native Educators Conference(NEC) with projects on display Monday morning, February 1 at the NEC.

For more details visit our website: [www.ankn.uaf.edu/aises/sciencefairstate.html](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/aises/sciencefairstate.html). Winners of this fair will go to the AISES National Fair in Minneapolis/St. Paul. ✨



# Southeast Region

## Tribal college planning in Southeast Alaska: A Chronicle

by Andy Hope

I began working with tribal college planning in January 1998. At that time, Sealaska Heritage Foundation was administering the Kellogg Foundation planning grant for Southeast. Ted Wright and I agreed to coordinate. I had been working with the Tlingit Language Consortium for several years in an ongoing effort to develop education programs. We agreed that it would be a good idea for the language planning group to take the lead on tribal college planning because we felt that the core curriculum for the tribal college should be based in language and culture.

Our first meeting was a teleconference hosted by AKRSI at the University of Alaska Southeast Juneau campus. The next combined session was held in Juneau in February 1998 at the Centennial Convention Center. Darrell Kipp, founder of the Blackfeet Immersion School in Browning, Montana, was a special guest speaker.

Ted Wright and I traveled to Harlem and Browning, Montana to visit Fort Belknap Tribal College and the Blackfeet Immersion School to gather information on language programs. We met with the Ft. Belknap trustees and staff and discussed the possibility of certification of a Tlingit language certificate and two-year degree. Our intent at the time was to start the program in late 1998 but this plan did not work out.

In May 1998, the Tlingit Language consortium held a major conference in Juneau in conjunction with the Southeast Alaska Native Rural Education Consortium (SEANREC). Tlingit and Haida also provided travel from the Administration for Native Americans Language planning funds.

In August 1998 Sealaska Heritage Foundation transferred the Kellogg Foundation planning grant funding

to Tlingit and Haida. Ted Wright was contracted to administer the grant.

In October 1998 the Southeast Alaska Native Language consortium (formerly Tlingit Language Consortium) met in Juneau in conjunction with the SEANREC annual planning meeting. Participants grouped by community and presented assessments and priorities for language projects.

In February 1999 SEANREC met in Juneau to plan the AKRSI Native Science Camp initiative. At this meeting the participants, including the SEANREC Elders Council, adopted an interim charter for the Southeast Alaska Tribal College (SEATC).

In April/May 1999, the Consortium of Alaska Native Higher Education (CANHE) met in Juneau. SEATC and the Tlingit Haida Central Council (THCC) representatives gave presentations to CANHE.

In May 1999 an Interim Board of Trustees for SEATC was assembled. I was elected chair. The SEATC Interim Board met several times by teleconference in the summer of 1999.

In September 1999 John Hope and Jim Walton gave a presentation on the tribal college planning project to the participants at the Kiks.ádi pole

raising ceremonies. More than 100 Tlingit Elders and clan leaders signed a resolution endorsing the tribal college planning project as well as the interim board of trustees. The Chilkat Indian Village also adopted a resolution endorsing SEATC.

In October 1999 SEATC met in Juneau in conjunction with the SEANREC annual planning meeting. Tlingit and Haida grant administrators presented draft tribal college financial and feasibility reports at this meeting. The Wrangell Cooperative Association and the Wrangell Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood Camps also endorsed SEATC.

In November 1999 the Grand Camp Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood Convention adopted a resolution calling for utilization of facilities at Sheldon Jackson College by SEATC. It applauded Tlingit, Haida and AKRSI for efforts in planning a tribal college in Southeast Alaska and requested both to continue in a united way. The Douglas Indian Association adopted a resolution endorsing SEATC. The SEATC Trustees adopted articles of incorporation.

The board of trustees of SEATC are Arnold Booth, Isabella Brady, Nora Dauenhauer, Dennis Demmert, Dr. Ronn Dick, Andy Hope (chair), Joe Hotch, Roxanne Houston, Katherine Miyasato, Charles Natkong, Sr., Marie Olson, Dr. Joyce Shales, Sue Stevens, Dr. Bernice Tetpon and Jim Walton.

Thank you to the Elders and clan and clan house leaders that have supported the effort to develop a tribal college in Southeast Alaska. I would also like to thank the board of trustees for making a commitment to the education of Alaska Native people. ✨

# Athabascan Region

## Through the \_\_\_\_\_ of Many People

Choose your own word to fill-in the blank (voices, stories, eyes, hands, minds, wisdom, etc.) My choice is “experiences.”

by Amy Van Hatten

Right in the midst of my report the “I” and “my” usage is plentiful. It isn’t meant to be read as being egotistical but more to reflect how I achieved eventful tasks. Now and again I encourage people to begin with the pronoun “I” when sharing their experiences. For example, many Yukon-Koyukuk School District autobiographies started out that way. In addition many book chapters use the same approach in writing. Therefore, if you have intellectual information to share but are holding back because you don’t want to say “I did this” or “In my time,” it is literally acceptable to do so.

It was important for me to make that distinction since an Elder said we are not supposed to talk like “I did,” “I started,” “I learned,” “I interviewed” or “I decided.” However, I notice little attractive nuisances like “I am” and “I remember” as being okay.

In reviewing my job duties over the past year, I worked full time demonstrating, promoting, supporting, incorporating and recruiting specialized people to attend numerous meetings, conferences, retreats, workshops, cultural events and focus study groups statewide, stateside and locally—all for the purpose of educational reform.

The most recent such event, the Third Annual AKRSI Athabascan Regional Planning Meeting, was held at McGrath High School, October 27–28, 1999. The Iditarod Area School District graciously offered to host it. A big hearty thank you for the red carpet hospitality from IASD staff and students.

The first day of the regional meeting focused on Year-Four initiatives. Ten memorandum-of-agreement partners reported on the work underway

in their area. We all acquired a region-wide perspective to build upon as we moved into planning for Year Five. The details of the initiatives were discussed on the second day.

The day before the regional meeting I set up the room for the Elders to discuss details about the Year Four initiatives on culturally-aligned curriculum and language and cultural immersion camps. I also asked them to think about what kind of distinctions we should make as we prepare for our last year of initiatives focusing on indigenous science knowledge and oral tradition as education as they relate to current district policies and teaching practices. During the discussions I recorded the following notes:

- ✦ Elders do not want to be made to feel dumb when they ask questions about school.
- ✦ They want the school curriculum to make room for what they have to offer.
- ✦ The Elders want the students to know their self-worth.
- ✦ Students need to know where they come from.
- ✦ Students need to know how to



Participants gather for a group photo at the Athabascan Regional Planning Meeting in McGrath, October 27–28.

cook on a campfire the old-time way.

- ✦ Don’t call them kids. Respect young people as young adults.
- ✦ Don’t ignore Elders while in the school or outside the school.
- ✦ Don’t yell at students when Elders are in the teaching role.
- ✦ Set your own Elders’ ground rules.
- ✦ Everyone should be out there showing students we love them.
- ✦ Even godparents should help with a child’s upbringing.
- ✦ Explain to students why we do things the way we do.
- ✦ Share personal experiences on what spirituality and faith in God means to you.
- ✦ Encourage non-Native teachers to attend cross-cultural training.
- ✦ Students should practice listening to people around you, not just their earphones.

In closing, I would like to say, remember the diverse cultural traditions of the many tribes in Alaska. To understand diversity is essential to how we teach our children.

Happy trails,

Negalt denlebedze ✦

# Iñupiaq Region

## Quyaanna (thank you) AKRSI from the Northwest Arctic Borough School District

by Ruth Tatqaviñ Sampson, Bilingual Education Coordinator

The Alaska rural systemic initiatives that have been undertaken by the NWABSD under the memorandum of agreement with AFN have affected the school district in a positive way. Initiatives were designed in a way to begin systemic changes for school improvements.

In the beginning the pace was slow because the school district was looking for ways to initiate the projects into existing plans. An example has been the AISES science fairs. The school science fair is held in March but the AISES science fair had to be held in the fall in order to plan for the national AISES science fair. AISES science fairs are interesting because the students come up with projects such as the study of caribou lifecycles, uses of caribou antlers, using willow bark to make dyes, comparison of furs in cold weather, under-ice fishing with a net, the Aurora Borealis, population density of shrews and voles, bio-engineering to prevent erosion and other interesting projects.

AKRSI-sponsored Elders and educators came together to plan for subsistence curriculum. Although a curriculum was not written, much needed information was shared among the participants. In traditional times, education was provided one-on-one with parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and other extended family members teaching the younger ones. Today we try to simulate that experience in a classroom setting but it is difficult. However, traditional methods such as observation and hands-on experience are still reliable methods of teaching and learning. Using concrete examples in teaching concepts is

a practice that must continue for maximum learning to take place. Character building is also important to the Iñupiat because it affects survival in the Arctic. For example, hard work, endurance and patience were attributes that were developed in children. This was balanced by humor, enjoyment of the outdoors, hospitality and an attitude of gratitude.

The Elders at the subsistence curriculum development workshops gave the following advice to be shared with students: "If you see Elders doing work, stop and help them. Do not steal. Do not talk angrily back to anyone. Everyone should know his or her relatives. Respect other people's property. Give advice to younger people. Share your catch and bring food to your neighbors and others. Help others. Don't mimic or criticize others in a negative way. Don't expect to get paid for helping Elders. Don't waste food. Finish your work before playing. Don't stay up late. Respect other students and people." Obviously, these words of wisdom span across cultures, especially among Native people of Alaska. Cooperation was necessary for survival.

We are thankful that AKRSI has worked hard to make education relevant and meaningful to students in rural Alaska. Although many parents and educators are concerned about

the exit exam and teaching to the state standards, it does not mean that education about the local environment has to be excluded. There are ways to integrate information about the local animals, plants, geography, history and literature while still meeting state standards. For example, the Davis-Ramoth Memorial School at Selawik held their second Iñupiaq Week where they did cultural activities all week and then integrated their experiences into the regular classroom. Erdine Skin, an Apache teacher, was actively involved in the Iñupiaq subsistence curriculum workshops held under AKRSI; her students had very good AISES science projects last year. Debra Webber-Werle, a kindergarten teacher at the Napaaqtugmiut School at Noatak, has had many students working on dynamic science projects. A kindergarten teacher in Kotzebue recently requested assistance about integrating cultural activities into her curriculum. When the school district had their inservice on aligning state standards with the district curriculum, they were encouraged to use cultural standards to help them integrate local culture into their lesson plans. There are many ways AKRSI has affected the Northwest Arctic Borough School District and it will continue as a domino effect as time goes by, even when the project funding ends. We are grateful to all the AFN-AKRSI staff for all their hard work and contributions. We have only scratched the surface and will continue to search for the treasures we are yet to find in this whole arena of education. ✨



# Aleut/Alutiiq Region

## Alutiiq Regional Rural Science Fair

by Teri Schneider

The Kodiak Island Borough School District hosted the second regional science fair in the community of Ouzinkie, November 3–5, as a follow up to the Academy of Elders/AISES Science Camp held on Afognak Island this past summer. Last year's science fair was held in Old Harbor and as a result of that competition three of our students participated at the AISES National Science Fair last spring.

With 37 projects involving 68 students, the number of participants doubled from last year's regional science fair. Students from Chiniak, Larsen Bay, Port Lions, Akhiok, Old Harbor, Kodiak and Ouzinkie took part in this year's activities.

Not only are students sharpening their science process skills by taking part in developing science fair projects, they also have the opportunity to demonstrate their formal presentation skills while sharing some of their personal experiences and cultural heritage through projects that are culturally and environmentally relevant to our island communities.

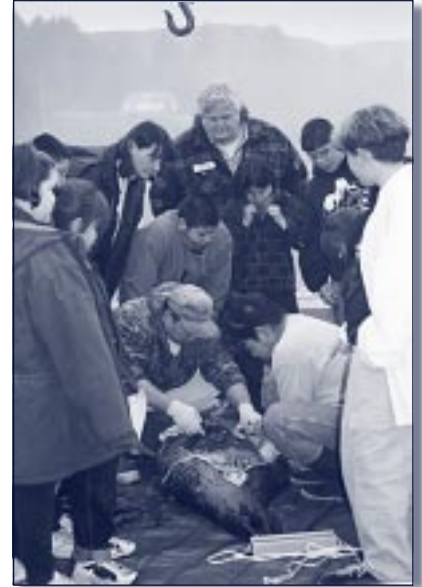
The Grand prize winners for this year's rural science fair are: Bliss Peterson, sixth grade Ouzinkie, with her project comparing the Alutiiq and Yupik Languages; Kalen Pedersen, sixth-grade Kodiak, with his project regarding construction and use of the bow and arrow; Patrick Schneider, third-grade Kodiak, who compared the burning efficiency of different oils and partners Matthew Delgado and Jon Panamarioff, seventh-grade Ouzinkie, who compared the quality of product utilizing various methods for preserving fish. Joining these five students at the statewide AISES science fair will be Ouzinkie team members Scott Detorres, Jeremy Clarion

and Cadman Peterson with their project demonstrating the deadfall trap and Old Harbor's Ivan Christiansen and Rocky Christiansen with their project pertaining to the burning qualities of various oils.

Returning judges, John Tershak, Ann Knowlton, Ole Mahle and Kathryn Chichenoff noticed an overall improvement in student presentation and depth of knowledge and understanding of the projects. Students who attended camp stood out to all of the judges, having achieved three of the four grand prizes!

One of the activities that took place during the science fair included a seal harvest followed by a biosampling done by Native Harbor Seal Commission member Mitch Simeonoff and his assistant Roy Rastopsoff, both from Akhiok. Students were able to take part in the collection and recording of data that was later submitted for the Harbor Seal Biosampling project. Eventually the seals were butchered and shared among the Ouzinkie community.

Other activities hosted by the school and greater Ouzinkie community included a welcoming ceremony with a performance by the Ouzinkie Alutiiq Dancers, a volleyball tournament and an incredible community potluck.



*Andy Christofferson, Ouzinkie Advisory School Board member, and Roy Rastopsoff begin to take samples and measurements of a seal during the rural science fair in Ouzinkie.*

During the day the Ouzinkie teachers absorbed the visiting students into their classrooms and organized interactive projects utilizing the talents of Kathy Nelson, the artistic chaperone from Port Lions; Alan Dick, the AKRSI science coordinator and Asako Kobayashi, Kodiak High School's Japanese exchange student.

AKRSI will be hosting the first ever AISES Alaska State Science Fair, January 29–31, 2000. With funding provided by AKRSI, we will be sending a team from the Alutiiq Region to represent our area of the state. Our team consists of Native and non-Native students from in and outside the district who excelled at the regional level science fair.

Plans for next year's Alutiiq Regional Science Fair are being formed. If your district or school is in the Alutiiq region and interested in sending a team to compete, please contact Teri Schneider, 486-9276 or email [tschneider@kodiak.k12.ak.us](mailto:tschneider@kodiak.k12.ak.us). ✨

## Elder Interview: Nick Galaktionoff

Interview and transcription by  
Moses L. Dirks, Unalaska, November 28, 1999



I was born in Makushin, Magusim kugan aganaqing 1925. This month or next month. And after I was born, kids they didn't know how they were born anyway. My dad and my mom they were going to move into their own house. My dad built a house and finished it. So then my mom and dad was ready to go. I had an older sister named Malaanyaa. They went out and pack things over. And me, I was left with my grandmother. So my grandmother grew me up all the way.

When I was five years old I started helping my dad. I didn't know what I was doing. He always told me that I was doing good. I suppose I was making a mess, but he always said I did good. I ran into the house and tell my grandmother. My grandmother was a very important person to me that time. She would always teach me; I didn't really know my real mom and my dad. She told me that was my dad. But I never called him my dad. I always call him Ludang, "my oldest." So I don't know my real mom because my dad call him Ayagang, "my wife." So I start calling her my Ayagang. We grew up that way.

Before he (dad) go to St. Paul, he would take the *baidarkiskin* off 'cause you save the ribs anyway. You don't want them rot away. After he come back from St. Paul, them guys were working for forty dollars a month. People make more than that in one day now days. Then after he come home from St. Paul, take a rest for one week and start work on his *baidarki*, changing the string ropes on there and soak the skin in the creek. After it got dried up it don't get stretch or shrink anyway (the sealskin). After

two days you put them on. People come in and help him sew it up and everything and no time he finished it. No party, but they always had tea parties after that. So my dad told me I was five or six years old. I know I was small. I don't know how old I was. My dad said that he was going to take me out in a *baidarki*. But, my grandmother told him, don't take him too far out. I know I can't see nothing. I have nothing but a smile on my face. Finally, he got me in a *baidarki* hole (in the front). Boy my eyes were barely sticking out. Then he launched his *baidarki* giving me a ride around from that house all the way far as the creek and from there turned back, all the way as far as that point. And we finally landed. My grandmother lift me up from the *baidarki* take me out, take me home. I thought that it was a lot of fun I ever had.

Because we didn't have our own toys, we all made toys. That's all we had. Pretty tough them days. But everything I do this better and what anybody do it looks better. But when I was eight years old I started fishing. I am not alone but always go with them fishing, seining right in the front.

Those were the days when it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun for every kid. Them days the people work on fish and after that my dad is gone. Go out and get some wood and fish. My dad and my dad's brother and his friend and guy named Matfii Burenin, John Burenin, Akiinfer Galaktionoff—he was my dad. John—that was his brother but he got different dad. He never come home. There was not even a storm, not even windy. People there looking for them. They didn't find them. Finally, Iliya Burenin find the boat in another bay all chopped up. Japanese got them. Japanese started to move into Unalaska in the mountains, hide away spying Dutch Harbor.

So that was 1939. The marshall got there on the mailboat. Not the mailboat, but Coast Guard boat. He found out my grandmother and mother did not have no help. And back to Unalaska again. Finally try and find a place for us to stay. Finally Coast Guard got there and pick us up and we come in 1939. I don't like it but as kids we can't do nothing by himself. I was 13 years old.

And after that I am doing something like everybody else, helping my mom.

In 1939, just about 1940, my grandmother died. She was seventy-nine years old. I didn't know she was seventy-nine but after she died, after I grew up until fifteen-sixteen, I found out she was seventy-nine years old. So I've got nothing to do so I had to move in with my real mom. I didn't like them kids in there, but they were my brothers and sisters. Always doing something. For ten cents you tell them to do something. I am getting ten cents from somebody else. Ten cents was a lot of money. I would buy two big bar candies. Now days them forty, fifty cent bar candies are twice as small as the big candies before.

And from there I work most of the time. When I was fourteen years old,

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school started. And they wanted me to go to school. I was happy for a while. I might learn something. I was in school but I didn't like my teacher. If I don't say "Good morning Miss Jorgensen," she would always hit my head with a little ruler. Boy, I didn't like that. I have been up at the school. I know how to sign my name. So one morning I got sandwich and I got a big coat. I make a big sandwich and put it in coat pocket and I left. People go up to school but me, I kept going all the way to the trail, Biorka Trail. I walk all the way over to that Beaver Inlet. I am not even scared but I will be scared later. I did not have a place to stay. I take walk on the beach for a while. Dark comes I start eating my sandwich. I stay by the small creek, put my head down and drink water. I did not have a cup. I eat half of my sandwich. Later I went into the grass and went to bed. I sleep good for a while and I wake up, pitch dark. Boy, I am kind of nervous. Early winter started, right after school started, oh, about a month and a half after school started. I got into Beaver Inlet over night. Next morning, I got up and finished my sandwich. No I don't want to stay there again. So I come home before I lose my trail. No truck road up on top side, just a trail. I could have come in to town earlier but I don't want to come to town when it is daylight. And I am scared of the goats up there. We got to go through this pass, about twenty goats up there. Belongs to Mr. King. Boy, pretty soon they would be teasing me all the way. I got chased from them animals; run before they hit me and I went over the fence. When I come on this side I feel safer. I come all the way to my house and my mom said, "We have been worried about you, where have you been?"

"I've been camping." Well I didn't see no camp in Beaver Inlet.

Next two days the marshall, Mr.

Bill, I forgot his last name, he wanted me back to school. I told him if you put me back to school I am going to run away for good. I was scared but I said that anyway. So later he said okay stay home if you want to. He left me. That was Bill Brown. He was a marshall before Vern Robinson. Somebody else was the marshall before Bill Brown too. He died in Seattle. He was an Aleut. His Mother was Aleut I guess. He talked Aleut because everybody talked Aleut around here anyway. Not any more. ✨

*Nick "Nicholai" Galaktionoff was born in the village of Makushin on the island of Unalaska in 1939. Nick comes from a large family; he and his sister Marina are the only survivors. Both of his sons reside in Unalaska.*

*Nick's hobbies include halibut and salmon fishing. He used to go out seal hunting and fishing whenever he got a chance. He now has poor eyesight and does not go many places anymore. Nick likes living in Unalaska and enjoys fishing and walking around town.*

## ANKN Website

by Sean Asiqluq Topkok

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network website is updated almost on a daily basis. We make information pertaining to Alaska Native knowledge easily accessible for rural educators and communities. With most of the communities having Internet access, using the World Wide Web provides us with a tool to distribute resources. With the various initiatives being implemented throughout Alaska, it is a challenge to communicate in digital form; however, many resources are available on the ANKN website.

Recently added resources on the ANKN website include video and sound presentations, articles and publications, information on AISES science fairs and curriculum science units. They can be found at:

◀ <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/new.html> ▶

Additional resources are available at:

◀ <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/rol.html> ▶

The most recent addition to the resources online is *Alaska Native Games: A Resource Guide* by Roberta Tognetti-Stuff. Resources are available online for educational use only.

There are APRN radio broadcasts are also available for educators:

◀ <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/sound/> ▶

Science curriculum units are also available online. These science units include applications to science, math and cultural standards.

◀ <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/units/> ▶

If there is anything in particular that you are looking for, but don't know where it is, you can always search the ANKN website at:

◀ <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/search.html> ▶

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at 907-474-5897 or email:

◀ [Sean.Topkok@uaf.edu](mailto:Sean.Topkok@uaf.edu) ▶



# Yup'ik Region: Gathering the Resources

*The following is a speech that was given during the Alaska Native Education Council (ANEC) conference in Anchorage on Oct. 18, 1999. Certain areas were revised for the reader to understand from a readers point of view. This speech was made for a listener. Quyana naaququ.*

*by Nita Rearden, Lower Kuskokwim School District*

Some of you will remember when our parents, grandparents or great grandparents saved practically everything. They saved items like canvas, flour and sugar sacks, Crisco and coffee cans, Blazo and kerosene cans, Blazo boxes and different types of glass bottles. Each item was recycled in such a way that nothing was wasted. For instance, Blazo boxes were used for cupboards or storage containers; flour and sugar sacks were used for dish towels, diapers or even undergarments if mothers sewed; empty cans were used for kitchen and tool containers or dog dishes; gallon Blazo cans were used for seal-oil containers or other purposes.

I remember one time I was traveling to Fairbanks after the holidays with a Blazo can full of seal oil in my hand. My mother recycled every resource material she could. At the Anchorage airport, when I walked through the line to get on the jet, a security officer stopped me and told me I could not take the Blazo on board. I answered her that it wasn't Blazo, but the content was seal oil. She didn't believe me and said she would have to check it. Oh boy! I mentioned to her the contents would make the airport smell. She went ahead and opened it anyway. The truth did come; she wrinkled her nose and the people behind me smiled and my friends laughed.

Do you remember as a child all of the materials we collected that were considered trash but we used as toys? We gathered cans for our play dishes or parts of clothing. We put cans on our shoes to look like we were wearing high heels. We used grass and wooden sticks for dolls because we could not take our nice homemade dolls outside. We used willow

branches for bows, slings and arrows to hunt pretend grass seals. We collected pebbles for play bullets, marbles or food. We used sticks for storyknives when we were not allowed to take out the beautiful decorated, ivory storyknives. We made do with whatever we could create in order to play and pretend. All of what we did was good! We were using hands-on experiences in the content areas of science, social studies and language arts. Today we find our own little people would rather watch TV, play Nintendo or sports instead of utilizing natural resources. Parents found out that these distractions are convenient for babysitting but don't realize the harmful effects.

Our respectful ancestors taught us to collect resources from nature such as animal skins for clothing, plants for food and medicine and grass, tree barks and roots used for dishes or for water and berry buckets. When we collected these items, we learned skills such as sewing, taking care of animals, hunting and more. Our background dealing with these resources

has made us strong Alaska Native people! Our resources are real! When a person is connected to either land, religion, home, culture or school, the person has an anchor to their identity. Today we gather some of these same materials for beautiful Native arts and crafts to sell or make gifts for someone special. Money has become an important part of our gathering. So many resources are available from the stores, we see many items wasted whether it is food, household items or other materials. Most everything ends up in the dump!

As an educator we still gather resources. They aren't necessarily the resources our ancestors taught us about but they are necessities for classroom use as books, textbooks and writing supplies. Teachers gather resource materials to help them become better teachers in order to meet the needs of their students. Many educators today are researchers. We search to gather information especially if we believe what we worked for is the right thing. For instance, in my job, I look for research on bilingual materials in order for parents in our district to understand that speaking two languages is better than being able to communicate in only one. Research shows that as adults, being able to communicate in two languages helps us to be better problem solvers.

When I was thinking about what topics I could talk about for this conference, I thought of many issues, issues such as the English-only law, the new bilingual law, subsistence, loss of languages, benchmark testing, high school graduation qualifying exams and quality schools—all of

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which are issues that affect us. I thought of how I could discuss these matters, but you know what? Without the background knowledge we have gained from a resourceful childhood, we would not be able to deal with any of these issues.

Just recently a teacher from Atmautluak and I were discussing how children learn. She told me about an interesting moment she had with her father when she became a teacher. He told her that a child is like a tree acquiring many branches. The branches of the child increase as he learns new concepts. New branches continue to grow when they are utilized well. Sometimes branches stop growing when a person drops his cultural background. From this I learned we can discuss issues and link them to our cultural background. It is important that our children know how to utilize their cultural resources!

This year it seems like we have very strong issues to deal with. I think the Alaska Native Educators' Conference is an important place to begin. Communication and understanding of the issues is important to allow us all to grow another branch. Let's continue to gather our resources to help one another and our children. *Quyana qanemcivqarlua.* ✨

## 2000 Native Educators' Conference

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Sponsored by the Alaska Native Educator Associations and  
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