



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

Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative Funded For Another Five Years

by Frank Hill

The first five-year phase of funding and activities of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative officially ended on August 31, 2000. Due to the continuing success of the AKRSI in its curricular reform efforts, the National Science Foundation has approved funding for a second five years, beginning November 1, 2000. The Alaska Federation of Natives will continue as the sponsor of the project.

The success of the AKRSI is due to the inspiration and work of many people. As we close out Phase I and begin on the next phase, it is only fitting that we acknowledge those who have contributed to the success of AKRSI during the first five years.

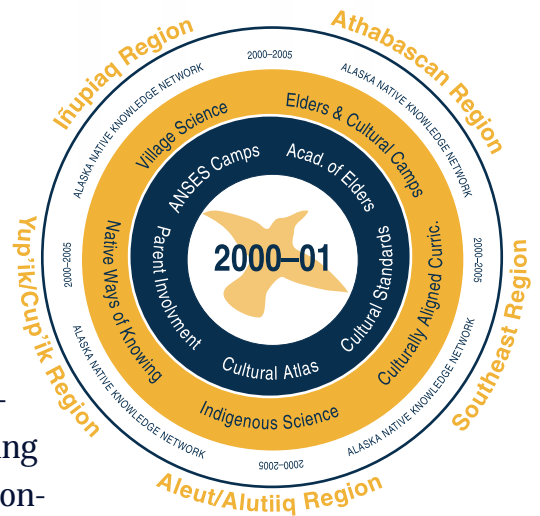
First, thank you to all of the Native Elders from throughout the five regions for their patience, wisdom, understanding and willingness to share their cultural knowledge. Without their participation in AKRSI, we couldn't have begun the systemic reform effort.

Next, a round of applause for Dr. Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley and Dr.

Ray Barnhardt. Oscar, for the inspiration and ability to teach us and others the legitimacy of the Native world view which is the cultural and philosophical basis for AKRSI; Ray, for his phenomenal ability to keep track of all of the complex issues, translating Native knowledge into relevant curricula for Alaska's Native students and leading the teams as we "perform" for NSF review panels.

The AKRSI staff deserves much of the credit for its success: the regional coordinators from the five cultural regions including Andy Hope III in Southeast, Teri Schneider out in

(continued on next page)



Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| AKRSI Funded | 1 |
| Native Educators' Conference | 3 |
| How Does the Crane Keep Its Language? | 4 |
| Observing Locally, Connecting Globally | 6 |
| ANSES Corner | 8 |
| Iñupiaq Region | 9 |
| Athabaskan Region | 10 |
| Yup'ik Region | 12 |
| Southeast Region | 13 |
| Alutiiq Region | 14 |
| Alaska RSI Regional Contacts | 16 |



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(continued from front page)

Alutiiq/Aleut territory, Barbara Liu on the rivers of her Yup'ik country, Elmer Jackson up north in Iñupiaq country and Amy Van Hatten among her folks in Athabascan territory. All of the regional coordinators learned how to work with Elders, brought them together with schools and educators and brought a local focus to each year's initiatives. The folks on the UAF campus: Sean Topkok, Paula Elmes, Lolly Carpluk, Dixie Dayo, Jeannie Creamer-Dalton, Dr. Claudette Bradley and others who lent their support to the project are deserving of thanks for their dedication and hard work. We need to remember the undying efforts of Alan Dick for his collecting and writing of science teaching practices that will benefit Native students for many years to come.

Our 20 memorandum-of-agreement (MOA) school districts and other regional partners who have hosted much of the work accomplished by the AKRSI should receive special recognition for their willingness to attempt a new approach to curricular

reform. As they continue the work after AKRSI support, they become leaders in the reform effort.

We deeply appreciate Julie Kitka, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, for her personal support and her willingness to convince the AFN Board of the validity and value of the AKRSI, both at the beginning of the project and for its continuation into Phase II.

We appreciate, too, the continued partnership with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the University of Alaska for their willingness to incorporate and validate Native knowledge systems into university and state educational policies and practices.

To all of the entities and persons named and those whose contributions we may have inadvertently omitted, a great big *quyanaa!* *Quyana!* *Qagaasakung!* *Baasee'!* *Gunalche'esh!* *Chin'un!* Thank you! We look forward to working with you for continued success during the next five years. ✨

Sharing Our Pathways is a publication of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, funded by the National Science Foundation Division of Educational Systemic Reform in agreement with the Alaska Federation of Natives and the University of Alaska. We welcome your comments and suggestions and encourage you to submit them to:

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\$ Teacher Grants for Math, Science & Technology

Alaska teachers may receive up to \$5,000 for innovative, hands-on classroom projects. See the ASTF web page: www.astf.org. No web access? Call Sharon Fisher, Outreach Administrator at Alaska Science & Technology Foundation, 907-452-1624.

Planning Underway for 2001 Native Educators' Conference

by Virginia Ned and Ray Barnhardt

Over the past few years, Alaska Native Educators have formed a series of regional associations to support initiatives addressing issues related to Alaska Native education. These associations will once again serve as the hosts for the 2001 Native Educator's Conference to be held February 4–6, 2001 in conjunction with the annual Alaska Bilingual/Multicultural Education/Equity Conference February 7–9, 2001 in Anchorage. The purpose of the Native Educators' Conference is to provide an opportunity for people engaged in education impacting Native people to come together and learn from each other's work and to explore ways to strengthen the links between education and the cultural well-being of indigenous people.

This year's NEC will include a work session on February 4, 2001 aimed at finalizing and adopting two sets of guidelines that have been drafted as extensions of the work on the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*. Participants will review draft *Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally Healthy Youth*, as well as a set of draft *Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages*—both of which are under development through a series of regional meetings this fall.

The Native Educators' Conference provides an opportunity to share and contribute to the excellent work that is underway in schools and communities throughout the state. Building on past themes, the tentative theme for the 2001 NEC is "Reaping the Harvest of Indigenous Knowledge." Proposals for workshop presentations at the

NEC should be submitted to the ANKN offices by December 15, 2000. For proposal forms, a registration packet or further information, contact:

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For information regarding the 27th Bilingual/Multicultural Education/Equity Conference, contact:

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and Early Development
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Fax: 907-465-3396. ✨

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Division of Subsistence and the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission announce the joint release of

WHISKERS! 2.0.

WHISKERS! is a multicultural, multimedia database of indigenous local knowledge about Alaska marine mammals organized into seven geographic regions: Southeast Alaska, North Pacific Rim, Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula, Aleutians and Pribilof Islands, Bristol Bay and Northwest Alaska. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game, with support from the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission, compiled the database from key respondent interviews with Alaska Natives in approximately 65 Alaskan coastal communities between 1992 and 1998. As a result, over 3100 notes have been compiled from Elders and active hunters.

WHISKERS! will

- assist teachers with meeting Alaska science curriculum standards,
- integrate traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom with western science,
- utilize technology in the classroom and
- implement locally-relevant and culturally-responsive curriculum material.

To receive a free copy of the CD and user's guide, send an e-mail with your name, affiliation and mailing address to Craig Mishler, the compiler of the database. Craig's email address is zippy@alaska.net.

How Does the Crane Keep Its Language?

by Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley

“When I was a little bitty baby, my momma would rock me in the cradle, in them old tundra hills back home,” and as I rocked I would hear the voices of my ancestors just as the crane chicks in their nest hear the mother crane making its call.

I don't know if the crane has the genes in its DNA to make its own distinctive call or if it learns it from its mother and other members of its own kind, but it does learn to speak the crane language. Baby cranes do not make a call like that of a seagull's raucous, squalling sound or like any other member of the bird family. Each species has its own distinct call—a language readily identifiable as its own—and all those unique languages continue to be passed on from one generation to the next.

As Native people, we too have our own unique languages which have been passed on from one generation to the next for many millennia. So why are we losing our Native languages so rapidly? Could it be because we, as parents, grandparents and villagers, do not speak to our children in our own Native language anymore? Why is it that we do not speak to them in our languages? One of the reasons is that our primary language has become English, which is a voracious language that eats up our Native languages. Perhaps this is brought about as a result of the remembrance of some Elders and parents of the shaming, abuse and punishment they received in school for speaking their own Native language. We must begin to freely talk about such experiences and the hurt feelings and shame so the healing process can begin.

So what must we do to keep from losing our Native languages? For one thing, we can look at other indigenous people who have been successful in re-enlivening and revitalizing their languages. We can take a look at the Maori language nests or the Native Hawaiians' programs and then put into practice that which is proving to work. We must consult with our Elders to see what we, as Native people, need to do to save our Native languages. This is a very tough and complicated charge for those of us engaged in teaching, research and role modeling. Head Start teachers, parents, Elders and villagers have the grave responsibility of teaching our Native youngsters their Native language. After all, they are our future.

Why teach our Native languages that are often looked upon by the modern world as useless, nontechnical and incapable of conveying profound meaning and concepts? As Alaska Native people we need to convince ourselves and our young ones that our Native languages are important and can convey deep meaning and complex thinking. As I have said in the past, using our Native languages thrusts us into the thought world of our ancestors. We can talk about our traditional hunting and gathering ways and sophisticated technology by using our Native languages. For example, our Yupiaq word, *pinaa*, which means “his, her or



its strength,” can mean physical strength of a person, of a bow, of the *oogruk* skin covering the *qayaq* or of water. It can mean intellectual prowess of a person, place or thing. It can mean emotional or spiritual strength and stability, all depending on the context in which it is used. Or take *qalluq*, our word for rolling thunder or electrical discharge. It is now our word for electricity. Who says our Native languages are not technical? They can be very technical and profoundly spiritual at the same time. Don't ever believe anyone who puts forward such feeble reasons for encouraging us to lose our Native languages. Manu Meyer, a Native Hawaiian, puts it this way: “We practice abstract thinking, but it is tied to purpose and a meaningful existence.” We—ourselves and our youngsters—need to learn and understand this important philosophical thought.

There are other reasons why we should not lose our Native languages. They allow us to articulate spiritually and emotionally and convey the deeper meanings of life. Richard Littlebear of Montana has pointed out that our languages allow our people to articulate the subtle attributes and meaning associated with self-governance, law and order, jurisprudence, literature, a land base, spirituality and sacred practices. We, as well as the rest of the world, cannot afford to diminish the diversity of cultures. To have but one language and one culture in this world would be boring indeed and would put our very existence as a species at greater risk.

The most important part of growing up is when children are developing a beginning understanding of their language, culture and place. However, human beings do not have a built-in mechanism for learning a particular language. Unlike the crane, Native children have no such genes in their genotype, so they have to listen, imitate and learn to utter the sounds found in their own languages. It is like having to learn English, German, Russian or any other language—they have to work at it. The children have to be talked to in their own language during play, so they can imitate, mimic things and ask a lot of questions. They have an acute curiosity to learn during their early lives. We must encourage this attribute by doing things that they can learn from in association with their families, friends and communities. By doing things that are important to their families and communities, their curiosity and willingness to learn will never diminish. In the school, however, they are often learning about things that are foreign to them and find no application in the surrounding community so that by the time they get into the fifth and sixth grades, their inborn curiosity to learn has been leached out of their minds. Sad, but true. We have too many dropouts from high school and others who drop out intellectually and emotionally long before they enter high school.

I have a problem when history is written by an outsider, especially when it deals with Alaska or Alaska Native history, because it is often just one interpretation, usually from a limited perspective. You know where our history is found? It is in our *quliraat* (mythology) and *qalumciit* (stories). So invite the Elders to come into the classroom to tell the stories in their own language. You will find that the values and those qualities that make us a strong people are embedded in our Native words and stories.

The youngsters will begin to understand and yearn *yulunii pitallqertugluni*—being a person who is living a life that feels just right. Alaska Native mythology contains the power and wisdom for guiding us in making a life and a living that feels just right. Alaska Native languages enable us to show proper respect and express courtesy for all elements of Mother Earth.

Another important language activity is to arrange for the Elders to teach the youngsters singing, dancing and drumming. In doing so, the children will become acquainted with the technical words ascribed to rituals, ceremonies and sacred practices. By learning the songs, they will begin to cultivate an identity and connection to place. As hunter-gatherers, we had no need for written history because our history was embedded in place, stories, songs, dances and movement from place to place according to the seasons.

The youngsters should be brought outdoors to begin to appreciate and experience the beauty of nature such as the caterpillar, chamomile and tree. They must be taught that we are connected to everything. The caterpillar eats vegetation, turning it into excrement which is useful to the tree. It gives off carbon dioxide which is also used by the tree. The tree provides a home and food for the caterpillar and gives off oxygen which is used by the caterpillar. As shown by the abbreviated cycles above, everything must go somewhere. Everything that is done in nature is done for some purpose.

Human beings cannot have everything that we want. We must learn to live with limited needs. We must learn to respect and be satisfied with what we have. Life is the greatest gift that we have and we must nurture that which makes life meaningful. Most importantly in that regard, we must maintain our languages because language, more than anything else, shapes

who we are, just as it does for the crane. By maintaining our languages, we are sustaining the ultimate standard of health and endurance of the human species. ✨

ANKN Website

The ANKN website continues to add new pages. Here are just a few:

- The Phase II Cycle for Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative is available at: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/phase2.html>.
- One of the new sections is the Handbook for Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum by Sidney Stephens: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/handbook.html>. This resource requires Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- There is a link to a science unit entitled Dog Salmon by Joy Simon and Velma Schaefer: <http://www.uaf.edu/aine/salmon%20web%20copy/sindex.html>.
- Another new link to a very useful resource is to the Nikaitchuat Ixisabviat Project. This is the Iñupiaq immersion project for preschoolers sponsored by Kotzebue IRA. The curriculum is available on the Alaska Native Curriculum and Teacher Development Project website: http://www.alaskool.org/native_ed/curriculum/OTZImmersion/PROJECTABST.html.

All of these resources should be used for educational purposes only. Any information utilized should follow the *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge*, which is available at: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/standards/culturaldoc.html>. ✨

Observing Locally, Connecting Globally

by Sidney Stephens

Imagine cruising 30 miles down the Tanana River from Perkins Landing to Fox Farm on a warm, sunny July day. Imagine that your boat was piloted by one of three expert Athabascan captains: Elder Howard Luke who has lived, hunted, trapped and fished the river his entire life; Sam Demientieff, member of the Demientieff Navigation family, who grew up barging freight to communities on the Tanana, Yukon, Koyukuk, Iditarod and Innoko Rivers or Wes Alexander, the only five-time winner of the Yukon 800 riverboat marathon, now running riverboat tours to his historic Fox Farm allotment. Imagine the stories you'd hear and the lessons you'd learn.

Well, the 20 teachers in the first *Observing Locally, Connecting Globally* (OLCG) class didn't have to imagine because just such a trip kicked off this two-week class. After a brief introduction to our captains and equipped with Howard's river map, topo maps and GPS receivers, participants boarded their boats. Before casting off, the captains each talked about the

fickle, ever-changing nature of the Tanana. How its level is affected by hot weather but, unlike the Chena River, not much affected by rain. How sandbars and channels shift and change over night and over time. How banks crumble and ledges form due to erosion and permafrost.

Once underway, each captain pointed out examples of these phenomena, intermingling navigational tips with personal reminiscences of their lives on the river. For example, Sam pointed out different riffles and what they might hide, but also shared barging stories like when the burnt skeleton of the *Elaine G* stuck out from a sandbar for years until the constant force of the river and ice dispersed it.



Jonas Ramoth discusses poisonous plants.

Or when the ding, ding of the pilot's bell called all hands on deck to witness the historic passing of the *Steamboat Nenana* on its last run to Fairbanks. Wes talked about his childhood fascination with the river and about his grandfather's patient instruction to watch and remember everything. By paying attention to details and traveling the river over and over again, Wes mentally cataloged hundreds of river variables now used to interpret each riffle, sand bar, cut bank and eddy. Howard, too, has a mental map of the river but preferred to talk of people and places such as Lost Creek, so called because a bootlegger got lost in there and never came out, or Fox Farm itself where, as a boy, Howard skinned and tanned fox hides for the "Old Man."

Traveling with these men, one was awed by their knowledge and confidence and intrigued by glimpses of the river as they know it. For them, the Tanana was clearly much more than part of the scenic view from the Parks Highway or a water body to be studied and measured. It was an integral part of each of their lives and stories.

So what kind of a course was this anyway and how did a river trip fit in? Good questions. Essentially, OLCG



Sam Demientieff looks at a Landsat image with class participants.

is a new project aimed at promoting global change education in Alaska by first engaging students in local environmental observations and monitoring relevant to their community and then connecting these investigations with a broader understanding of global change. We began this course for teachers with the river trip because the study of global change is, of necessity, the study of earth as a system—its interconnected atmosphere, water, soil and living things. Our three captains demonstrated an incredibly rich understanding of these inter-relationships as they finessed their way

the constant input of local experts like Dixie Dayo, Mary Shields and Elders Jonas Ramoth and Catherine Attla. This format was based on the belief that the linking of local knowledge with science instruction in schools is a mutually beneficial process that can only enhance both the cultural well being and the science skills and knowledge



Catherine Attla talks about having respect for everything.



Howard Luke at the Fox Farm.

down the Tanana. They embodied the kind of long-term observation and systems-thinking necessary not only to navigate a dynamic river, but to monitor the local environment and connect to global change. Thus they set not only the tone, but the standard for the rest of our class, not to mention providing us with one heck of a great day on the river!

Once back in class, we attempted to put these ideas of long-term observation and systems thinking into practice by focusing on the international GLOBE¹ curriculum combined with

of students.

For example, weather is one of the most critically-observed and mentally-cataloged phenomena in villages all over Alaska. Being able to observe and predict the weather is of critical survival value to people traveling on land or water. Weather extended to climate is also of critical importance when considering issues of global change. Consequently, we began our class focus on weather by first

listening to Jonas and Catherine share their knowledge and perspectives. Then we honed in on and practiced specific GLOBE protocols for gathering atmospheric data (e.g. minimum/maximum temperature, snow/rain fall and pH, cloud type and percent cover) and for submitting weather data on the Internet. This same local/GLOBE format was followed for hydrology,

land cover and soil investigations in hopes that participating teachers would then implement and extend such studies with their own K-12 students.

And though we feel happy with OLCG's first attempt at merging Native knowledge with global change education, we realize that we have much to learn and that there is a long way to go before such teaching is either perfected or made prominent in most rural schools and communities. Luckily, the National Science Foundation funded this project for three years which will enable us to support teachers and students throughout the year, connect to related local and international projects and plan and carry out two more summer institutes. If you'd like more information on how you can be a part of this effort, please contact us: Sidney Stephens (ffss1@uaf.edu), Elena Sparrow (ffebs@uaf.edu or 474-7699), Leslie Gordon (lgordon@northstar.k12.ak.us) or Martha Kopplin (mkopplin@northstar.k12.ak.us or 452-2000 ext. 431). ✨

1. The GLOBE curriculum (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) is an extremely comprehensive, well-tested and hands-on program in which K-12 students collect atmosphere, soil, hydrology, land cover and phenology data over time, entering it on the Internet for scientists and others to analyze and use. See www.globe.gov for more information.

ANSES Corner *(Alaska Native Science & Engineering Society)*

by Claudette Bradley

On July 11, 2000 thirteen middle school students from rural villages in the Interior and North Slope arrived for the two-week Fairbanks AISES Science Camp 2000. The staff included four Elders, four teachers, four resident advisors and a cook. Students developed science projects selecting subjects from the natural environment, discussing their project with Elders, receiving guidance from teachers for their experiments and discovering that science is all around them and that Elders have a lot of knowledge.

Participating Elders were Howard Luke, Elizabeth Fleagle, Margaret Tritt and Kenneth Frank. They taught students to do beadwork, carve and file bone for an Athabascan spear throwing game and tan caribou skins. They organized fiddle dancing in the evenings and told stories passed down for generations. Their advice and confirmations were invaluable to the students.

Teachers set up a computer lab of Thinkpads® operated by solar panel batteries. The Thinkpads® and printer were donated by IBM; Todd Kelsey of IBM in Rochester, Minnesota joined the camp for a week to work with students in the computer lab and to assist them in developing a weather station with a student-made rain gauge, wind socket and barometer. George Olanna of Shishmaref was a teacher in the computer lab and helped students develop their science projects and display boards. Rita O'Brien led the students in a medicinal plant and berry-picking adventure. Under Rita's direction students made cranberry leather which is like Fruit Rollups. Maria Reyes met with students in Rasmusen Library computer lab to help them search the

Internet for information on their science project. She guided students through a web search and the development of their bibliography. I worked with the students, Elders and staff to help keep the camp afloat.

Following the camp, I served as one of five educators nationally to chaperone 20 teenage scientists to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Youth Science Festival 2000 in Singapore. These students were top science fair winners in state and national science fairs in the Lower Forty-Eight. I was the only person from Alaska among the US delegation sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Of the 800 people from 21 countries attending the conference, 600 were high school students and 200 were educators. The students and chaperones attended a very large science fair with 600 APEC Youth Science Festival (AYSF) 2000 students and nearly 2000 Singapore students. For two evenings the 21 delegations took turns presenting cultural performances for all ASYF participants.

During the teacher/chaperone seminar, I reported on the AISES science camps and fairs sponsored by the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. The participants expressed interest in

an exchange program between their students and AISES camp students.

We had the opportunity to visit secondary schools in Singapore. Many of us were especially interested in the mathematics programs since Singapore students scored highest in mathematics in the international TIMSS study. The Singapore students and teachers were very well organized with lots of hands-on classroom activities.

The K-12 AISES program in Alaska has been changed to Alaska Native Science and Engineering Society (ANSES). This year we are finishing the end of the first five years of the AKRSI program. Each of the five cultural regions are planning a science fair where they will select grand prize winners to attend the statewide ANSES science fair in Anchorage February 3-5, 2001.

The second five-year round of AKRSI initiatives will emphasize mathematics learning for rural students. The AKRSI staff will include mathematical investigations for science projects as a category in the regional and statewide science fairs. We will discuss mathematical investigations as projects during the monthly audioconferences held in each region. For all science projects students should design data sheets for collecting data and attach the data sheet on their display board.

We look forward to new adventures in science and mathematics during the next few years. We hope you will look at our website <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/aises> where you will find the science fair handbooks and details on the statewide fair. Please contact Alan Dick at fnad@uaf.edu or call me at 474-5376 if you have any questions. ✨

Iñupiaq Region

Academy of Elders and Culture Camps 2000

by Elmer Jackson

An Academy of Elders from the Northwest Arctic met and participated in the Iñupiat Ilitqusrait summer camp near Kiana. This year a total of 40 students, youth workers and staff participated in the three sessions for ages eight and up. During the second session, Elders from the Kobuk River region, Kotzebue and Selawik met and participated with the campers and staff.

The theme was “A Gathering for a Time of Learning and Sharing.” The goal was to teach the young people the subsistence way of life through fishing, hunting, berry picking and gathering edible and medicinal plants. One student commented that after drinking *tilaaqii* (labrador tea) her sinus cold began to clear. She also said that she was going to take some home.

There were many edible plants and sweet roots growing near the shoreline of the camp: *masru* (sweet roots or wild potatoes), *qusrimmaq* (rhubarb), *quagaq* (sourdock) and *patitaaq* (wild chives).

The academy shared and gave *algaqsruutit* (advice), sang love songs and told stories. *Algaqsruutit* are words of advice to the young.

Gill nets and seine nets were used to catch salmon, *quasrilluk* (whitefish) and other Kobuk River fish. Some were sealed, cut, washed and hung on poles to dry. Some of the fish were half-dried for *iganaaqtuk*, that can be baked or boiled and tastes delicious with seal oil.

Summer youth workers from Kiana met and interviewed Elders for the Oral History Project sponsored by the Kiana Traditional Council. The youth workers participated and helped the staff and campers. They are to be

commended for their great help.

An eagle flew over, observing the camp. I could see the caring eyes of the Elders for they knew that a large eagle is capable of flying off with a small child. Yet they were also awed by the sight of the large golden eagle perched on a spruce tree.

During one of the evening sessions, the Elders shared the following *algaqsruutit* with the young campers:

- What your parents and grandparents teach you is important.
- We will depend on you; you are the ones who will run our Native corporations.
- Give the best *kuak*, *puugmiutaq* and seal oil to others and one-tenth to the church.
- Research your family tree to find out who you are related to.
- The more you learn in grade school, the easier time you will have in college.
- When you help others, especially Elders, don't ask for payment.
- Don't make fun of people, especially those who are disabled.
- When you have a head/sinus cold and are coughing, spit out the mucus; it is not healthy when it stays in your body.
- Learn the Iñupiaq way of life as well as the Western way. Don't

forget that you are Iñupiaq.

- When we were growing up our parents and grandparents taught us to leave other people's property alone.
- Don't steal. If you leave people's things alone, you will make the right choice.
- Respect nature.
- We are never too old to learn.
- Keep your camping area clean.
- Don't throw plastic trash into the river. The fish, birds and other animals can get caught in it.
- When you are out boating, do not throw your trash on the land or in the water. If you do, it will keep the animals and fish away.
- Do not leave your campfire burning while you are away; it could cause a forest fire.
- Hunter and campers have a responsibility to keep the land and water clean.
- When you are camping with other people, share your food with them.
- The Elders' way of life is the truth.
- Culture camps need more support.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and AFN supported and provided for the Academy of Elders. Thanks to MOA partner Northwest Arctic Borough School District, Ruth Sampson and staff, the Kiana Elders Council and the Kiana Traditional Council for their support of the Academy of Elders and the Iñupiat Ilitqusrait summer camp 2000. The camp staff did an excellent job and the food was great! Thanks. ✨

Athabascan Region

A Mini-Archeological Field School and a Place-Names Field Trip

This year, the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute (CHEI), a partner in the Athabascan Region of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, is involved in several different activities to enhance educational opportunities for the youth in Minto and foster intergenerational exchange of information.

Field School

This summer, with support from the Alaska Humanities Forum, cooperation from the Minto Village Council and the volunteer assistance of archeologist Carol Gelvin-Reymiller, CHEI implemented a mini-archeologi-

cal field school for 17 youth in Minto during August of 2000. This summer, with support from the Alaska Humanities Forum, cooperation from the Minto Village Council and the volunteer assistance of archeologist Carol Gelvin-Reymiller, CHEI implemented a mini-archeologi-

cal field school for 17 youth in Minto during August of 2000. the students on the field of archeology, the tools used in an excavation, different map views, soil profiles, site layout and surveying and work on troweling, screening methods, observations and other techniques of archeological field work. The students recovered some bone and one artifact—a fragment of a groundstone blade (in four pieces). Most of the participants were under the age of 15 and although they were attentive and persistent, the inclusion of field assistants would have been useful with this young group. Carol Gelvin-Reymiller noted that “The kids were really good and careful

with the equipment. They were good workers.” Overall the students and the Minto community members seemed very interested in the work and learning about their past and archeology. CHEI hopes to continue to expand this activity as part of the cultural atlas work.



Three participants working on a grid.

cal field school for 17 youth in Minto during August of 2000.

This field school took place at the “North Fork East Point” site near the village of Minto, which has been used for viewing animals and where stone artifacts have been found in the past. The mini-field school lasted about four days and included discussions with

Field Trip

On a bright sunny fall afternoon near the Fourteen-Mile area along the Tolovana River, a group of Minto Elders, youth, CHEI staff and other participants stopped to make tea and have lunch during the annual cultural Atlas field trip. The Elders demonstrated how they look for firewood, start a fire with birch bark, cut spruce boughs for sitting and make Indian fry bread. Stories were told by the Elders about hunting in this area and the Minto youth took photos of the place and the other participants. Kraig Berg, a Minto teacher, also participated in the field trip. For two days, the group visited other sites along the Tolovana River including Twenty-Mile Hill, Three-Mile Slough, the old Tolovana Roadhouse and Monty Creek Cabin. The stories and photos taken during this trip will be used during the school year as a curriculum resource for the cultural atlas project.

For the past three years, with Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative support, CHEI and the Minto School have supported the development of a curriculum resource to record the indigenous place names of traditional and contemporary land sites used by the people of the Minto Flats. A web site with a map of Minto Flats was created and during the school year the students learned how to create web pages that describe specific sites or the Athabascan culture using text, photos, images, and multi-media.

A mapping project curriculum document has been prepared by Bill Pfisterer, Linda Pfisterer and Paula Elmes that describes the four segments of this project. These include: (a) bringing the community and school together to plan the field trip, (b) gathering information through field trips, (c) using technology including web page design for putting together the information and (d) expansion of

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illustration skills through the visual arts to illustrate events and activities that cannot be photographed.

This academic year, in addition to AKRSI, the initiative has received support from the CIRI Heritage Foundation and the AOL Foundation Interactive Education Initiative. ✨

*Field trip participants
in front of the old
Tolovana Roadhouse.*



Respecting Elder's Knowledge

by Negaltdenlebedze Amy Van Hatten

About three years ago Peggy Cowan helped me understand the word “contextualize” for curriculum development. Now I think I have a fair understanding of the word and it has inspired me about the wonders of how we can use Elders’ knowledge to improve what we teach in rural schools.

How do we learn about what is in front of us already?

Native Elders and local community members can be considered an important resource for the curriculum. Elders have gathered data in the back of their minds that just needs a little stimulation in an appropriate context to be shared with the students. Think of this as part of “being out there” as you help students do detailed documentation of what you are learning from the Elders. By focusing on the appropriate context, the strategy can be adapted to take advantage of Elder expertise in whatever communities it is implemented.

How about research ethics and protocol?

Indigenous people worldwide have taken steps to help define their own

cultural and intellectual property rights. It is becoming less difficult for indigenous people to speak up for their rights, but at the same time it is still taking a lot of time for funding sources to understand or respect that. Help in this area can be obtained from the new *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge* available through the ANKN web site at www.ankn.uaf.edu.

How much should we worry about the accuracy of the new information?

Although it is difficult to develop a sensitivity to the fact that no form of measurement is neutral, we can at least try by asking, “What is the relationship between how things appear and the environment in which they are situated?”

How can we know what is the right information to look for?

Choosing a theme is helpful in keeping everyone focused. In addition, we can develop a glossary of key words used in teaching a particular topic and then go over them together with the Elders and community members so everyone is understanding the same thing. You affirm the ideas in words and gradually those words begin to develop into concrete community-based data.

How should we analyze the information?

Have a pre- and post-meeting with Elders to review key words and concepts for teaching in a particular area. The Elders can help focus on the appropriate interpretation and meaning of the information that has been gathered.

I hope this list will help in using Elders’ knowledge in respectful and useful ways. ✨

Yup'ik Region

Camp Nunapitsinchak

by Julia Dorris, Kalskag

On the last evening of our stay as I sit in the boat while driving up the Kwethluk River, I have time to reflect on the past two weeks of my “apprenticeship” as a future Elder. Annie Fredericks from Chuathbaluk and myself, along with all the Elders of the camp, are on our way to pick blueberries.

It's sort of a nostalgic feeling as I look at the Elders around me. In the driver seat from Kwethluk is John Andrew Sr. His wife, Annie, is seated directly behind him; to the right of me is Annie Jackson of Akiachuk (no shortage of Annies at our camp!) and co-pilot of the boat is our one and only “Mitzy” of Akiak. I have to tell you about Mitzy and provide an explanation of his name. He was just adorable during introductions on the first day of our arrival. He speaks very little English and yet he courageously introduces himself and even explains his nickname, Mitzy. In broken English he gives his name, Wassilie M. Evan, and then his Yup'ik name, Mis'ngalria, hence the “shortcut” as he so aptly puts it—Mitzy.

Half of the students speak and understand Yup'ik and Calista provided an interpreter, Alice Reardon, who is very good with everyone. The students, Elders, teachers and chaperones all enjoy her. We are very fortunate to have her as our interpreter.

There are seventeen students. Nine are upriver students from Crooked Creek, Chuathbaluk, Aniak and Upper and Lower Kalskag. The remaining eight are from Tuluksak, Akiak, Akiachak and Kwethluk.

Our day starts in the girls sleeping quarters with the wake up call by Annie Evans from Aniak. Three students are selected daily to do kitchen

duty, lunch duty and after-dinner duty. After breakfast the students divide into groups of three and rotate between teachers, chaperones and Elders. The groups choose different experimental projects related to Native science with Alan Dick, Annie Evans and Michelle. When complete, the students are to do a demonstration and report on their findings.

John and Mitzy show the boys and anyone who is interested how to hang fish nets. The girls bead and some make sewing kits. The Elders identify different medicinal and edible plants and their uses.

Every evening after dinner the Elders have what we call Elder Hour. They pass on their advice and wisdom to not only the students, but to myself and the other adults involved. Alice translates a question-and-answer session after the Elders speak. What is very impressive is the fact that Alice also records the talking sessions with Elders. It is impressive that she is going to transcribe the tapes and Calista will have on file a very valuable gift from these Elders. We need to learn all we can from all our Elders. They have a gift worth giving and passing on, which if we are willing to listen will be of great benefit to us. We in turn must pass it on. It is our heritage.

Reflections

We were fortunate to have had a few nice days to go on a salmonberry picking excursion. We went to Lumarvik which is downriver from Bethel and made camp for two nights. The kids picked a bucket of berries for the Elders Council which I thought was very nice. The camp is above the village of Kwethluk known as the Moravian Children's Home or Nunapitsinchak. One of our Elders, Annie Jackson, said when she was younger she used to be a resident employee of the children's home.

Our cook, Michael Andrew from Kwethluk, and Peter Galila of Akiak had a set-net and the fish they caught were cut by the students with a watchful eye from the two Elders—Annie Jackson and Annie Andrew. For the girls it was a very important learning experience; some had never cut fish before. The fish were hung by the boys who obviously had never hung fish before and were firmly taught by the Elders.

Besides the camp directors, Andy and Staci Gillilan, I cannot forget Vern Fredericks, husband to Annie Fredericks from Chuathbaluk—they were both chaperones. Vern lived most of his life in Anchorage and for him this was a learning experience too; the Elders, John & Mitzy, took him right under their wing.

Along with Peter Galila, Vern and Annie Fredericks, Michael Andrew and myself, it was meaningful in that we learned we must continue to teach alongside our Elders as our first teachers.

I thought this camp went well. I look forward to seeing it in the future as improvements are made. It's a good experience for the young who unfortunately are losing their culture and subsistence way of life, as well as some of their Native language. I feel this camp opportunity takes the necessary step in educating them in ways they are losing or have lost. ✨

Southeast Region

by Andy Hope III

I wrote the poem [opposite] following a dream in the fall of 1992. The dream was about an ideal Native learning institution which insured that our Native customs and traditions thrived. I call it my tribal college poem today. I suppose that the dream was an inspiration for (and very much influenced my efforts to organize) the first Conference of Tlingit Tribes and Clans which took place in early May, 1993 in Haines and Klukwan.

Following that conference, in an article in *Raven's Bones Journal* (which I edited for ANB Camp #2), I made the following statement:

"I think that the Conference should formally organize as a learning institute, an educational institute, the School of Tlingit Customs and Traditions. I have recommended that the Sitka Tribe of Alaska charter an independent educational subsidiary with the current planning committee members serving as charter members of the board. STA staff is drafting a charter at press time (late September 1993). Perhaps this entity, whatever it will be named, can serve as the basis for a tribal college."

Formally organizing the Southeast Alaska Tribal College has been a long, drawn-out process. I have documented this effort in previous SOP articles.

The challenge before the Native community is simple: are we ready to take responsibility for the education of our children? There are a number of issues that must be addressed.

The Native student dropout rate in Alaska schools has been unacceptably high for quite some time. As a result, many of our Native people do not have access to higher education opportunities. It is our responsibility to develop programs that will ensure that Natives who slip through the cracks of public schools gain access to

higher education. One of the options is for SEATC to develop GED, survival skills, parenting and other basic adult education programs. Perhaps the various adult education programs administered by tribes in Alaska can be consolidated to provide resources to support the education of students enrolled in tribal colleges.

There is a great need for Native language and culture programs. I believe that tribal colleges should be the institutions that certify Native language fluency and proficiency. Tribal colleges will be in the best position to offer curriculum to implement the *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools*, the *Guidelines for Developing Culturally-Responsive Teachers*, the *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge*, the *Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally-Healthy Youth*, and the recent law enacted by the Alaska legislature that requires school districts to establish a Native language advisory committee in every community with 50% or more Native student enrollment. In a time of a nationwide shortage of teachers, it is imperative that we begin an effort to train Native teachers. Tribal colleges will be a key player in this effort.

It will take a united effort by the Alaska Native community to ensure that tribal colleges succeed. I am thankful to the many Native organizations that have endorsed the devel-

The School of Custom and Tradition

Where do traditions come from?
Where do customs originate?
How are customs and traditions
learned?
Carried forward?
What are the sources of
inspiration?
Look to ones that know
Look to creative ones
Look to ones with ideas
Look to the artistic
Look to Elders
Look to the young
Look to the energetic
I attended the school of custom
and tradition
A school of vitality and richness
A school of ideas
A school where one will always
learn
Something new
Where people meet
Where people teach
Where people learn
From each other
Support each other
And move on to become
The school of custom and
tradition
Reflected
In their lives
In their minds
In their eyes

—Andy Hope, Oct. 1992

opment of tribal colleges in Alaska: The Alaska Intertribal Council, Alaska Federation of Natives, the National Congress of American Indians, Alaska Native Brotherhood/Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand Camp, Chilkat Indian Village, Douglas Indian Association, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Wrangell ANB/ANS and Sitka ANB/ANS among others. ✖

Editor's note: A new book containing the proceedings of the 1993 Conference of Tlingit Tribes and Clans, titled *Will the Time Ever Come: A Tlingit Source Book*, has just been published and is available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

Alutiiq Region

Lu'macihpe: Dance and Language Camp at Dig Afognak 2000

by Olga Pestrikoff

Sperry Ash, Rhoda Moonin and R. Carlos Nakai facilitated an outstanding camp at Qatani during the last week of Dig Afognak 2000.

Fifteen students from around the island attended and diligently studied as Dr. Jeff Leer of the University of Alaska Fairbanks worked with them. Dr. Leer taught the alphabet and then proceeded to write down the songs using his newest version of the orthography that proved to be quite exciting to learn. Elders in attendance assisted in dictating the appropriate letters for the sounds in the words. We then were able to sing the songs correctly understanding the words completely. What a sense of ownership those students exhibit in singing those songs!

Our Elders in attendance are most appreciated! Thank you to Kathryn Chichenoff, Julie Knagin, Dennis Knagin, Marie Skonberg, Irene Coyle and Sven and Mary Haakanson.

Besides singing and dancing we experienced many other activities such as swimming, hiking, storytelling and playing games including outside traditional Alutiiq games as well as indoor activities like cards. Visiting and *banya* were the most enjoyed regular events. Students especially loved the swings as well as song practice while lounging on the hammock during the evenings.

Special activities also occurred. Several people really enjoyed rowing around in the wooded dory, the *1 CIHA HAK*, made by Dennis Knagin and Ole Mahle at the Qatani Boat Yard. R. Carlos Nakai's flute music enter-

tained us at various times during the week.

Several other people assisted with the students' camp experience. Teacon Simeonoff helped with safety. Phyllis Clough helped with organization.

The week wrapped up with the students performing for the opening of the Native Village of Afognak Board

work session. The dancers of Lu'macihpet presented the members present with a piece of driftwood with "The Board" written on it, because they wondered what a "board" is and came up with their own creative interpretation.

The fifteen students left the camp with a new understanding of some of the older songs, two new Sugtestun songs, a Russian folk song, a certificate of completion and a piece of regalia. The necklace that was designed by R. Carlos Nakai is made of tree bark with a printed image of a petroglyph on wound string with shell and bead adornments.

Planning for next year's camp is already underway. If you have any ideas that you would like considered please call the Native Village of Afognak at 907-486-6357. ✨

Leadership Institute Enhances Kodiak Village School Programs

by Eric Waltenbaugh

A student from Port Lions gingerly steps up to the podium in the Kodiak Borough Assembly Chambers and speaks in support of a resolution she has worked on over the course of a week. Then another student from Ouzinkie slides up to the microphone to voice her arguments. For ten minutes a steady stream of students from seven villages in the Kodiak Island Borough School District saunter quietly, but proudly, up to the microphone to speak on three separate resolutions they have crafted as a collective group. The mock board, made up of the school superintendent, a school board member, a city council member and the borough mayor, listens carefully to what the students have to say, discusses and debates the issues and then votes on them.

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This mock board meeting was the culminating experience of an intensive week of leadership training held to bring village high school students together. The week of September 18–22, thirty-one high school students from seven different villages in the Kodiak Island Borough School District flew to the town of Kodiak to attend the 2000 Leadership Institute. Workshops focused on teaching aspects of leadership in an applied manner. There were no lectures. Instead students were immersed in a variety of interactive workshops. They learned Parliamentary Procedure by doing it, explored the concept of leadership by facing numerous challenges as a group, practiced public speaking in a nonthreatening environment, wrote resolutions about issues that affect them and had a chance to present them in a forum that mirrored the real process. In addition, it is expected that students will take some of their resolutions to the Alaska Federation of Natives Youth and Elders Conference to be presented in that real forum.

The Leadership Institute was designed to enhance the village school curriculum, to provide age-appropriate interaction among high school students in village sites and to engage students in a real task that leads to personal action and empowerment. The institute was scheduled in advance of the Alaska Federation of Natives Youth and Elders Conference in an effort to help prepare the students for that important event.

Numerous community organizations were involved in the planning, development and implementation of the Institute. It brought together members from Native corporations, tribal councils, the borough, the school district, the State Troopers, Toastmasters (a public speaking club), the Alutiiq Museum, Kodiak town teachers and many others. This collabora-

tion from a broad range of community organizations was essential to making the Leadership Institute a success.

Funding for the Leadership Institute comes from a three-year Federal Department of Education grant that provides for two immersion institutes per year in addition to supporting the village programs in implementing a model of education that is more culturally sensitive.

Village teacher reports after the

institute indicate that students are talking about how different this immersion activity was; they are more motivated in their regular classes and they are already asking questions about when the next institute will occur. These types of interactive, personally-relevant and socially-significant immersion activities go a long way in enhancing existing village programs and empowering our rural students. ✨

Sugtestun Immersion Workshop in Nanwalek

by Olga Pestrikoff

The five-day Sugtestun Immersion Workshop was hosted by Nanwalek Tribal Council at Dog Fish Camp, a logging operation housing facility near Nanwalek. The community of Nanwalek initiated the workshop to prepare their teachers and parents for the newly-formed immersion school that began this fall. The Nanwalek Tribal Council generously shared this opportunity with other Sugtestun-speaking community members. Through the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, Stella Krumrey, Phyllis Clough and I were able to attend as representatives of the Native Educators of the Alutiiq Region. Facilitators of the workshop included Roy Iutzi-Mitchell of Ilisagvik College in Barrow and Loddie Jones, a Yup'ik immersion kindergarten mentor-teacher from Ayaprun School in Bethel.

The main message they brought to participants is that immersion is the only real model of teaching a language with the quickest, most effective results in teaching actual conversational language to the point of fluency.

Very frequently language programs teach the target language through reading, writing and analysis using grammar lessons. Some

people who are able to learn second languages in this manner usually tend to apply mental translation and analysis forever. They use their first language to think then translate their speaking to the new one. The way to speak fluently is by being surrounded and involved in listening and speaking the language, which gives the language power.

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The two components necessary in acquiring a language are motivation and opportunity. Motivation is driven by an interest and a need. Opportunity includes the actual learning of the language as well as consistent, meaningful and relevant use of the language as a method of communication. Striving to retain and regenerate an indigenous language necessitates creative attention in light of this global society in which we presently live.

Various actual workshop experiences helped to give a clear picture of the most effective method of teaching and learning a second language by the method called Total Physical Response. Experiences included lecture, actual lessons, participant presentations, videos, discussion and small group planning of specific language activities by community members. An actual theme plan based on the subsistence calendar was one of the documents drafted by the close of the workshop.

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During the evenings we enjoyed ourselves too. Some people fished, picked salmonberries, went four-wheeling, enjoyed extensive walks

on the beach, watched a mountain goat, beaded and danced. Overall, it was a very productive and enjoyable week. ✨

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