



# 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 ♦ Rural School and Community Trust

## Multicultural Education: Partners in Learning Yugtun Qaneryararput Arcaqertuq

by Theresa Arevgaq John, Director  
Rural Alaska Native Adult Program, Alaska Pacific University

Keynote address to the 27th Annual Bilingual Multicultural  
Conference, February 7, 2001

**W**aqaa! Greetings to the bilingual conference planning committee, Elders, educators, parents, students, administrators and community members. I am honored and humbled to be the keynote speaker for the 27th annual BMEEC 2001 conference theme, "Multicultural Education: Partners in Learning." There are several key points in regards to the Yup'ik heritage language and culture I feel are important to address today. I will use English as well as Yup'ik in my presentation.

The key points that I would like to address are:

### Arguments

1. Who is responsible for the language maintenance? Is it the parents? Community? Educators? Elders? Self?
2. Should we be concerned about maintaining Yup'ik Language? Why?
3. Will bilingualism affect a child's formal education? How?
4. Do children with bilingualism have better educational outcomes?
5. Will we lose our Native cultural identity along with language loss?
6. Where are the Elders?
7. Should we support Yup'ik immersion programs?

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Theresa Arevgaq John instructing a class at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Photo courtesy of Rural Student Services, UAF.

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### *Ethnic Identity Formation and Its Implications for Yup'ik Language Development.*

I am fortunate to have been raised in a remote Yup'ik-speaking community on Nelson Island. This was the era when formal education was just being implemented into the community. Elders, grandparents, parents and prominent community members were the main educators who taught youth and adults the indigenous traditions and customs—*quliraat*, *qanruyuutet*, *alerquutet* and *inerquutet*. Oral traditional education passed down creation, raven stories and cultural values. Many Elders and community members truly believed and still believe in our creator, Ellam Yua. We are taught that Ellam Yua granted us our indigenous language, culture, history and spiritual world for us to keep and maintain. The ancestors' innovative and effective traditional teaching methods are integrated and effective multicultural education materials.

The Yup'ik pledge (opposite page) is recited in some Kuskokwim Delta villages like Toksook Bay. When I attended Calista Elder's Conference last November, I had an opportunity to visit the school and participate at the school assembly. There I requested the students to recite the pledge which I've attempted to translate.

I specifically wanted to share this with you because it's written in Yup'ik. The words in this pledge remind me of late Elders like Billy Lincoln, Sr. and my grandmother, Al'aq (respected leaders) who spent endless hours teaching us kids using these exact words. The important messages reflect cultural integrity, accountability, self-determination and encourage a foundation for youths' achievement.

At this time I would like to take a moment to recognize and thank the Yup'ik associate professor Cecilia

Martz, former Kuskokwim Campus faculty member, who developed the Y/Cuuyaraq poster containing these words. Our students will learn and live as the key holders of our Elders words.

With fluent indigenous languages, youth can have strong cultural and traditional knowledge, spirituality, communication skills and self-esteem. It is also evident as time goes on that it will only become more difficult for youth to maintain their first language. The English language world surrounds us and is slowly eroding our languages away, which is our power base with each generation. The lack of indigenous language brings suffering for youth and adults. For example, language barriers make it difficult for new generations to learn about traditional family ties and clans, ancient stories and songs, leadership skills, ceremonials, hunting and gathering skills and traditional laws.

We have learned from the research presented by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks regarding language loss among our Native groups. In some cases, like the Eyak and a few others, the only speakers are dying off. We must make an effort to ensure that the remaining indigenous languages are enhanced and taught to all ages. Our language and cultures are greatly affected and impacted by the daily use of English. On the other hand, we have community members who cannot speak their language yet have an understanding and sense of their culture. I would like to share with you two heartbreaking encounters I had with two elderly women who expressed their pain and sorrow with me. Both events happened in Bethel around the mid-1980s.

*Wangkuta yupigni qanruyutet aturluki anglituukut.  
Ilakuyulluta, ukvertarluta, pingnatuuluta.*

*We, the Yup'ik people, grow up following the traditional values and principles. We live in harmony, we have faith and also strive for prosperity.*

*Nallunrilamta yuuyaramteni piciryarangqerngamta  
nutemllamtenek.*

*This is because we have wisdom and knowledge of our traditional lifestyle.*

*Qigcikyaram aturtai taringumaut ellam iluanelnguut  
elpengqellrit nunuliutengqellrit-llu.*

*Those who hold and respect the traditional knowledge and laws of our spiritual worldview know that they will be rewarded for their proper behavior.*

*Qanruyutem aturtai umyuartuluteng, elluatuuluteng,  
nuuqitevkenateng yuuluqaqerciqut.*

*Those who follow the traditional values, laws and principles will become wise, knowledgeable and live to be prosperous and wealthy.*

The first person was an Elder woman in her sixties from a coastal village, waiting for a flight at the airport. While we waited, sitting on benches across from each other, a young lady came to her and asked her a question in English and grandmother responded back in broken English. Her voice was quivering when she told me that she could not communicate effectively with her own grandchild that she was raising. She was unable to teach her and other children the Yup'ik traditions and values because they did not have a common nor efficient communication tool. The grandmother looked very sad at that moment, which made me feel sorry for her. She was sad to see the passing of her heritage language, including her culture, as the students used only English at school and watch television after school. There is an argument that we face daily regarding language use responsibility. Who is responsible for resolving situations

like this? Are we as parents and families responsible or are the schools? I think we are all responsible—as parents, relatives, community members and educational employees—we must not let this continue.

The second Elder shared a similar situation with me. In her case, the teacher advised her to speak to her children in English because that would benefit their education. About twelve years later, another teacher approached her and said, “Why didn’t you teach your children Yup’ik?” At this point, she felt confused by two educators approaching her with opposing advice. She admitted it was too late now for children to learn Yup’ik who are older and will have a hard time learning the new language. She sat silently and cried. This is a national controversial issue with schools, governments and leaders who all struggle to deal with the question of if/how we should include indigenous languages in our schools. Like our

ancestors, let us unite and make a commitment to incorporate indigenous languages into all aspects of our villages so we can have societies with common languages.

These two women were willing to share their painful family crisis for a reason. They are not alone in this situation, many of our people are going through the same crisis. We cannot continue to hurt the hearts of our Elders, the holders of our cultural wisdom and knowledge. They are the backbone of our families and deserve the utmost respect. As Native speakers who are also educators and administrators, we can enhance language use in schools and at home and provide efficient communication tools for the students without endangering their scholastic achievement.

To encourage Native heritage language development, the parents, school board members, educators and prominent leaders all need to get involved in planning the annual academic curriculum. We must become proactive members by joining local and district school boards that guide and work with school administrators. We can and must identify quality Native educators and administrators with expertise and proficiency in Native languages and let them control the schools. Native educators should promote and provide local knowledge, wisdom and innovation through developing a dynamic curriculum. These steps will provide positive consequences for our Yup’ik heritage language.

We have our own Native immersion programs in place, like the ones in Bethel and Kotzebue, that develop and implement community-based, culturally-relevant curriculum. They have dedicated Native educators, staff and teacher aides who work diligently to ensure indigenous education through first languages. When I visited the immersion school in Kotzebue,

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I was impressed with little kids speaking Iñupiaq only. Shortly after I arrived, their teacher informed me that I could not speak English beyond the entrance area. I spoke to them in Yup'ik because my Iñupiaq language is limited. Disciplinary rules like these will enforce indigenous language use.

Naluk, my niece, has gone through the Yup'ik Immersion Program in Bethel since it was implemented a few years ago. She is now in the fifth grade, with fluent Yup'ik speech and grammar. Her mother, Agatha John-Shields, has been an influential educator and proactive parent of the program. Thank you for your persistence, Gus, in teaching all your children and other's Yup'ik at home and school. There is fear that some parents feel in giving their children an opportunity to learn the indigenous language. I was shocked and horrified that some Yup'ik parents in Bethel were resistant to enrolling their children into the immersion program. They believe their children will have a hard time adjusting to a standard English classroom after Yup'ik immersion classes. They simply don't see the need and are eager to have their kids become like everybody else. Today my sister's children can communicate with their grandparents in their first language. This proves that indigenous languages can be taught at home and school. It takes dedication, determination and persistence to make this happen. These students are the future leaders of our languages.

I applaud the efforts of all immersion teachers who provide essential lifelong cultural foundations for youth and serve as role models for students and educators. I used these two examples of what I consider to be an ideal and effective immersion program with a community-based curriculum. There are challenges from opposing parents, school board and community members who feel that Native education is not essential to

our youth. Please don't let them stop you from doing your job. Through programs like these, our descendants will learn and live Native ways of knowing without endangering their future success in an integrated society.

### *The Impact of Yup'ik Language Programs on Student Attitudes*

The Yup'ik language programs influence student attitudes in ways that make them feel proud of their heritage language and culture and will have a long-lasting positive impact on their attitudes. Harold Napoleon, in his book *Yuuyaraq*, states "Many villages have expressed interest in reviving cultural heritage activities and Native language use in their schools, because it has become evident that practicing one's cultural heritage and speaking one's heritage language promotes self-esteem in young people."

The *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools* says "Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community." One of the objectives of this standard states, "Students will be able to reflect through their own actions the critical role that the local heritage language plays in fostering a sense of who they are and how they understand the world around them."

When the youth learn to speak their heritage language fluently, they will be able to hear and learn many of our traditional *qanruyutet* and *alerqutet* that will give them guidance for healthy and prosperous lifestyles. Knowing one's language is interlinked with learning one's culture.

When I was doing my student teaching at Bethel High School in the early eighties, I had an opportunity to form a cultural club that met weekly. I formed this club because I had heard that there was a problem with cul-

tural diversity in school. The Native students were criticized for speaking Yup'ik or for wearing Native clothing. The goal of the cultural group was to develop and encourage cultural identity among students through traditional activities. They learned the history and meanings of traditional Yup'ik songs. During our sessions they viewed videos of dancers, learned about masks, *mukluks*, *qaspeqs* and headdresses. After a few gatherings, students began to show up in their *qaspeqs* and *mukluks* and were no longer ashamed of themselves. The parents of my students approached me in local stores and asked what I was doing to their kids. They informed me that their children's attitudes improved at home and they were anxious to attend school. We, as educators, can inspire our youth to become proud owners of their language and traditions.

My late grandmother, Anna Kungurkak, like many Elders, was my best educator allowing me to benefit by maintaining the advanced first language that belongs to our people. Elders in her generation who were raised through oral history have a solid personal and educational foundation. She once said "*Ilaten kenkekuvki elitnaurciqaten*": "If you love your family and community members, you will educate them." The true meaning of love is to make time to educate the young future leaders using the integrated teaching methods of our Native ways of knowing.

Our ancestors also teach us the importance of knowing who we are and that we should know our cultural values. The Yup'ik term *aciriyaraq*, refers to acquiring a Native name. It is an honor and comes with responsibilities. Through the naming system, we keep our ancestral spirits alive and we must carry that name with respect. The Elders stress traditional values like *naklekiyaraq*—caring for others, *kenkiyaraq*—love for all, and *ilangqersaraq*—having friends and

associates. These are integral parts of our societies that we must revere and nurture.

In reference to our traditional spirituality, we must revisit our traditional ceremonies and rituals that meant so much to our ancestors. *Yuraryarat*, the various dance ceremonials including *kevgiq*, *ineqsukiyaraq*, *kelgiq*, *kegginaquryaraq* and *nangerciyaraq* are diverse forms of prayer. The *angalkuut* (shamans), both men and women, played very important roles in these communities. The *angalkuut* are gifted with powers to heal, interact with animal spirits and serve as composers and choreographers. I am not promoting shamanism—I'm just informing you about the past. Elders inform us that our Native spirituality was forced aside or put under the table when newcomers arrived, with the expectation that ancestral powers will revive again when the time is right. I feel that the time is right now to empower ourselves to bring back our traditional forms of prayer through multicultural education. In the southwestern region of Alaska, young people are bringing back the drums and forming school dance groups. With formations of local dance groups, we are bringing back language and Native spirituality. This is possible with Native educators who organize and teach with the help of local Elders. I recommend books like *Cauyarnariuq* and *Agayuliyararput* for teachers to use that describe various ancient ceremonies told and described by the Elders.

In the past, I had several opportunities to work with and learn from respected Elders who live in various parts of our state. First, the Bilingual and Cultural Institutes in Bethel brought in Elders to assist Native educators for four intensive weeks. They collected materials and developed community-based resources for K–12 books. The Elders-in-Residence program at UAF allowed me to work and

teach with Elders from all over the state as well. These Elders taught college students for five intensive weeks. The students recorded, cataloged and archived videos and audiotapes at the local library. I would recommend all educators to utilize these resources of Elders sharing their biographies and life stories as cultural teaching tools.

I would like to take this time to recognize some of these Elders who took time to provide invaluable knowledge and wisdom in the past: Frank Andrew, Chief Paul John, Susie and Mike Angaiak, Teddy and Maryann Sundown of Southwestern; Austin Hammond of Southeast; Catherine Attla, Chief Peter John and Moses Johnson of the Interior; Mary Bourtokofsky of the Aleutians; and Jimmie Toolie and his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Issac Akootchook of the North. I salute all the Native Elders who have contributed to the education of our Alaska schools. Without them we would not have quality resources for our cultural curriculum. They are truly our Native professors.

### Strategies to Strengthen Communities and Families

The following are strategies I feel will assist in strengthening our communities and families for our children's education. For parents, the caretakers and first educators, please make time to teach your heritage language at home. Start with simple words like *kenkamken*—I love you. If you don't know the language, learn it with your children. Use note pads to write down Native words and post them all over the house. For example, post them in living rooms and kitchen areas and use them as visual reminders. Make time to talk with your children. It is best to teach them early in

the morning when their minds are fresh, and repeat them again later that evening. I would suggest a few words at a time so they don't get confused.

For communities, make a conscious effort to use the indigenous language daily. We need to become proactive and encourage members to become fluent speakers. I encourage you to invite Elders to use their first language to address the public in schools, churches, local events or on radio and television. Build a team of local education and community organizations to collaborate in efforts to incorporate and implement the use of indigenous language in social functions.

Academic institutions and administrators should become friends and supporters of immersion schools as well as bilingual and cultural education centers. Incorporate and implement culturally-relevant orientations for school board members, administrators, staff and educators on local language, history, culture and seasonal lifestyles. It is essential for all academic employees to understand and incorporate traditional ways of living. Partner with local Elders, prominent community members and agencies to assist in developing community-based academic curriculum. Utilize the *Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages* in conjunction with the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*. Encourage and sponsor bilingual educators to get certified and hire them. This will have a positive impact on our student retention rate.

*Tamalkurpeci cingamci mary-agcisqelluci yugtun qaneryararput nutemllarput-llu ciumurucesqellukek elitnauruteklukek-llu.* I just summoned you to fight to keep our indigenous languages and cultures alive. It's going to be an uphill battle. Let's stand up together as one team to enhance multicultural education.

*Tuaingunrituq Quyana.* ✨

# Alaska Native Literature Awards

by Olga Pestrikoff

Based on *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge*, the Alaska Indigenous Literary Review Board, a working committee comprised of Alaska Native regional representatives, has spent the last year planning a literature review and recognition process to showcase Alaska indigenous literary works at the Native Educators' Conference held February 4–6, 2001, in Anchorage. This historical event was an outgrowth of the work over the last five years through the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Alaska Federation of Natives in a special project called the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative.

The "Celebration of Alaska Native Literature" was held on February 4, 2001 at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage, Alaska, honoring five people representing a cross-section of the Alaska Native community. Each selection represented a different genre of literature important to indigenous people of Alaska and the world.

Lolly Carpluk of Mountain Village/Fairbanks, who helped to organize the gathering, said "It was a historic and very emotional event, impacting not only the prestigious indigenous authors being recognized, but their families, friends and, finally, the indigenous educators who have waited so long for such a historic moment as this—to see it come to fruition."

Pictured in the photo above right are recipients of three of the awards:

Lucille Davis, a Sugpiaq from Kodiak Island and Anchorage, was recognized for her storytelling, an example of which is published on a CD-ROM, *Gathering Native Alaska Music and Words*. Nora Dauenhauer,

a Tlingit from Southeast Alaska, was recognized for poetry in *Life Woven with Song*. Marie Meade, a Yup'ik of Nunapitcuar, was a translator and transcriber for Elders in the book *Agayuliyaraput: Kegginaqut, Kangiit-Ilu, Our Way of Making Prayer: Yup'ik Masks and the Stories They Tell*.

Not present were Eliza Jones, a Koyukon Athabaskan of Koyukuk, who was being recognized for her non-fiction work on the *Koyukon Athabaskan Dictionary* and Lele Kiana Oman, an Iñupiaq of Noorvik and Nome, for her book based on traditional tales called *Epic of Qayaq*.

Nora Dauenhauer, Lucille Davis and Marie Meade accepted their awards. The other two recipients, Eliza Jones and Lele Kiana Oman, were not present so representatives accepted the awards for them. Each was presented a plaque with their name and Alaska Indigenous Literary Award of 2001 engraved on it. Masks decorating each plaque were crafted by Ben Snowball of Anchorage who explained the significance of each of the five



Three of the recent recipients of the Alaska Native Literature Award are pictured with their plaques: Lucille Davis, Nora Dauenhauer and Marie Meade.

different masks prior to presentation.

All recipients received standing ovations in recognition of their important work ensuring that an authentic Alaska Native legacy is passed to future generations through publication of their knowledge in varying genre and media. The celebration was momentous for Alaska Native people and many tears were shed.

Following the presentation, writers shared some of their works. Nora Dauenhauer read from her published works. Lucille Davis treated the audience to some stories of her childhood in Karluk on Kodiak Island. Marie Meade also spoke to the group.

Andy Hope of Southeast Alaska, a leader in organizing the event, shared some of his poetry and the stories surrounding production of those selections. Elders present honored Andy for his lifelong pursuit of writing, including his persistent effort at establishing this first award celebration of published indigenous literature.

A very exciting piece of Alaska history unfolded that night, the celebration of published literature by indigenous people who come from a traditionally oral society! ✨

# The Best of Both

by Alan Dick

In the late 70s our family moved to Aniak. I was rather surprised when I learned that the name of the Aniak basketball team is *Halfbreeds*, as I knew this is not a complimentary term in all parts of the nation.

I gently asked my children what the name of the team was and how they got that name. Surprisingly, our youngest son, who was only a first-grader said, "They are the *Aniak Halfbreeds* because they take the best of both."

During the recent ANSES State Science Fair, we truly saw the "best of both." All projects were firmly rooted in the local traditions, yet brought out the science processes and principles that are reflected in the state standards.

After a long grueling day of inter-

viewing and deliberating, the judges were invigorated and repeatedly thanked us for inviting them. Why? The projects were a beautiful synthesis of both worlds. There is an unmistakable energy that accompanies the natural learning process.

AKRSI alone did not make this happen. We merely created an arena where motivated village students and teachers could shine. We created a framework that fostered a cultural synthesis of local knowledge and textbook knowledge. The students brought the evidence.

It would have been instructive to capture the discussion on tape as the four Western science judges and the five Native Elders deliberated the "Best of Show" projects. Each nomination for Best of Show was defended by a judge in the presence of the others. The observations that were shared reflected the keen insights that students had exhibited.

Later, one of the Native Elders, who was normally very quiet, was so emphatic in making the case for a project that he stood, vigorously presented his view and even shook his finger. When he sat down, he was stunned, and apologized for being so forceful. We smiled and thanked the Elder for his insight. The student had spoken to the Elder's reality.

These moments happen only once in awhile, but with cultural and science interests high and everyone knowing what to expect next year, a new dynamic is certain. The best of both. Again. ✨

# ANSES State Science Fair Results

by Claudette Bradley

Following are the results of the second annual Alaska Native Science and Engineering Society state science fair. We had six projects that were grand prize winners. The "Best of Show" was a project on insulators submitted by Marjeena Griffin, a tenth-grade student from Kodiak. We had 27 projects from 10 villages and 44 students with 10 chaperones. Thirteen projects were done by individual students, while 14 projects were done by teams of 2 and 3 students. Eight projects were demonstrations and 19 were experiments. The fair ran smoothly and we all enjoyed the Camp Carlquist facilities. The food was good and there were lots of outdoor and indoor activities to keep everyone happy. ✨

Village	Experiment/Demo	Place	Project Title	Name	Grade
Kodiak	Individual Experiment	Best of Show	Insulators	Marjeena Griffin	10
Mekoryuk	Team Experiment	First	Tanning Reindeer Hides	Robert Bujan	8
Mekoryuk	Team Experiment	First	Tanning Reindeer Hides	Amanda Williams	8
Fort Yukon	Team Demonstration	Second	Trapping & Tanning Marten	Christopher Engler	7
Fort Yukon	Team Demonstration	Second	Trapping & Tanning Marten	Matthew Shewfelt	8
Crooked Creek	Team Experiment	Third	A Cold Body	Willaim Felker	8
Crooked Creek	Team Experiment	Third	A Cold Body	Elena John	12
McGrath	Individual Experiment	Fourth	Buckskin Fringes	Arianna Solie	6
Circle	Team Experiment	Fifth	Snow Shelter	Scott Asplund	9
Circle	Team Experiment	Fifth	Snow Shelter	John Carroll	6

# *New Guidelines for Indigenous Languages and Child-Rearing*

## *Developed by Native Educators*

Two new sets of guidelines have been developed addressing the strengthening of indigenous languages and the nurturing of culturally-healthy youth. One of the purposes of these guidelines is to offer assistance to people who are involved in indigenous language and child-rearing initiatives in their communities. The guidelines are organized around the role of various participants, including Elders, parents, classroom teachers, communities and young people. Native educators from throughout the state contributed to the development of these guidelines through a series of workshops and meetings associated with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative.

The guidance offered by the guidelines is intended to encourage everyone to make more effective use of the heritage language and traditional parenting practices in the everyday life of the community and school. It is hoped that these guidelines will facilitate the coming together of the many cultural traditions and languages that coexist in Alaska in constructive, respectful and mutually beneficial ways.

Along with these guidelines are general recommendations aimed at stipulating the steps that need to be taken to achieve the goals for which the guidelines are intended. State and federal agencies, universities, school districts, families and Native communities are all encouraged to review their policies, programs and practices and to adopt these guidelines and recommendations wherever appropriate. In so doing, the educational experiences of students throughout Alaska will be enriched and the future well-being of the communities being served

will be enhanced.

Following is a summary of the areas of responsibility around which the Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages and the Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally-Healthy Youth are organized. The details for each area will be published in a booklet form and are currently available on the ANKN web site at [www.ankn.uaf.edu](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu).

### *Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages*

Respected **Native Elders** are the essential resources through whom the heritage language of a community and the meaning it is intended to convey can be learned.

**Parents** are the first teachers of their children and provide the foundation on which the language learn-

ing of future generations rests.

Indigenous **language learners** must take an active role in learning their heritage language and assume responsibility for the use of that language as contributing members of the family and community in which they live.

**Native communities and organizations** must provide a healthy and supportive environment that reinforces the learning and use of the heritage language on an everyday basis.

**Educators** are responsible for providing a supportive learning environment that reinforces the wishes of the parents and community for the language learning of the students in their care.

**Schools** must be fully engaged with the life of the communities they serve so as to provide consistency of expectations in all aspects of students lives.

**Education agencies** should provide a supportive policy, program and funding environment that encourages local initiative in the revitalization of the indigenous languages.

**Linguists** should assist local communities in the development of appropriate resource materials and teaching practices that nurture the use and perpetuation of the heritage language in each respective cultural community.

The **producers of mass media** should assume responsibility for providing culturally-balanced materials and programming that reinforce the use of heritage languages.





Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally-Healthy Youth *and* Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages *will be available in the near future from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. Meanwhile the guidelines can be viewed on the ANKN web site at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu>.*

## Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally-Healthy Youth

Respected **Native Elders** are the essential role models who can share the knowledge and expertise on traditional child-rearing and parenting that is needed to nurture the cultural well-being of today's youth.

**Parents** are the first teachers of their children and provide the foundation on which the social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being of future generations rests.

Culturally-healthy **youth** take an active interest in learning their heritage and assume responsibility for their role as contributing members of the family and community in which they live.

**Communities** must provide a healthy and supportive environment that reinforces the values and behaviors its members wish to instill in their future generations.

**Educators** are responsible for providing a supportive learning environment that reinforces the cultural well-being of the students in their care.

**Schools** must be fully engaged with the life of the communities they serve so as to provide consistency of expectations in all aspects of students lives.

**Child-care providers** should draw upon Elders and other local experts to utilize traditional child-rearing and parenting practices that nurture the values and behaviors appropriate to the respective cultural community.

**Youth services** and juvenile justice agencies should provide a sup-

portive policy, program and funding environment that encourages local initiative in the application of traditional child-rearing and parenting practices.

**Researchers** should work with local communities to help document traditional child-rearing and parenting practices and explore their applicability to the upbringing of today's youth.

**All citizens** must assume greater responsibility for nurturing the diverse traditions by which each child grows to become a culturally-healthy human being.

Further information on issues related to the implementation of these guidelines, as well as copies of the complete guidelines may be obtained from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, UAF, PO Box 756730, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730, <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu>. ✂

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# Southeast Region

## Getting From Here to There: Vision for a Southeast Alaska Tribal College

by Ted A. Wright

I have been thinking about tribal colleges and what it will take to establish and maintain such an institution in Southeast Alaska. In other states where tribally-controlled colleges have been established, enrollment grew as academic and support programs were developed and as awareness of the tribal college advantage spread through the region. Even though my visits to tribal colleges have only been for a week or two, I have seen and heard a lot of evidence that they work. For example, one study showed that students who attend a tribal college:

- Take less time than others to graduate,
- Stay in school and finish more often than other enrolled students,
- Have an ending GPA that is half a point higher than mainstream graduates,
- Carry less debt with them after they have completed their studies and
- Are more likely to stay in or return to their home areas after graduation.

The author of this study believed that the benefits of tribal colleges result from the fact that they provide a non-competitive environment where group and cooperative learning is emphasized and in which hands-on, inquiry-based methods prevail. A Carnegie Foundation Report on tribal colleges concluded that most tribal college faculty practice instructional methods that recognize rather than ignore the importance of traditional ways of knowing and of Native culture. More to the point, the tribal colleges recognize that all students need more than technique and a degree to succeed in life. They need

pride in their heritage and an understanding of who they are, as well as the belief that they can make valuable contributions to their families and communities. With this philosophy at the heart of their missions, tribal colleges offer classes specific to the cultures of the tribes they serve, as well as more general courses in Native studies and regular academic subjects. In this way, tribal college students gain a stronger sense of self while they earn a degree and take advantage of the opportunities higher education can provide. Many of them go on to successfully pursue further studies at mainstream institutions.

After hearing a message similar to this, a fellow member of an ANCSA corporation board on which I once served asked me why we would need a tribal college when existing institutions already have a hard time getting enough students through their doors. My answer then and now is that I believe there are a significant number of people in our educational system that want and need more than what the existing institutions have to offer. To be specific, I believe there are at

least three classes of students that Southeast Alaska Tribal College (SEATC) could serve, regardless of whether they are just out of high school or are adult learners:

- ◆ Those who want to take college classes and learn more about the world around them but from an Alaska Native cultural perspective. (These are continuing education students with academic or artistic/cultural rather than vocational interests.)
- ◆ Those who go to college with the intent to pursue a degree or certificate and are attracted to the tribal college because of its focus on Native culture and its abiding interest in their success. (These students would matriculate at the Southeast Alaska Tribal College and, depending on their goals, transfer to UAS or Sheldon Jackson College.)
- ◆ Those who would otherwise not view college as an option, either because their secondary school experience was not positive, or because they believe college is too hard. (For these students, the tribal college could work with high schools in a two-plus-two or charter-school-to-tribal-college program that is more in tune with their needs.)

The existence of this population is hard to prove by surveying people's opinions about what they might study or why current institutions have failed them. In fact, this is one of those times where you just have to have faith that, if you build it step-by-step, they will come. In my observations, most tribal colleges that have come into



*Southeast Alaska Tribal College Campus, Juneau*

existence have done so more as a result of someone's vision and faith than due to their collection and analysis of data. Still, the leadership of the tribal college movement in Alaska is working to compile basic data about the numbers of American Indian and Alaska Native students who drop out of high school, drop in and out of college over many years or exit college altogether. Even in the absence of definitive data, we know that too many of our students are not staying in school and are either not going to college or exiting after a certain point. If, as I claim, a tribal college is part of the solution to this problem, how do we get there from here?

My personal vision for Southeast Alaska Tribal College starts with the already-established Board of Trustees, which includes a significant number of Elders and is truly representative of our tribes. In terms of curriculum, I envision programs that align basic content with the cultural standards developed through the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and the regional Native Educator Associations. This kind of alignment is especially critical for training teachers and would necessarily be a part of programs offered to those who would teach Native language, culture and the arts. As far as how we would

teach, it is more true now than ever that our Elders and our Indian Education Program and JOM graduate's roles must be front-and-center with an eye toward institutionalization.

I also envision several Alaska Native charter schools throughout Southeast that would serve as a pipeline to the tribal college. The junior and senior year of the charter high-school experience would then include prerequisites for a SEATC Associate of Arts (AA) degree that is compatible with those offered by UAS and Sheldon Jackson College and articulates with their bachelor's degree programs but features an Alaska Native Studies emphasis and maintains a consistent focus on the relationship between Native and non-Native views of the world.

The question of whether there is a need for additional degrees and certificates beyond those already offered can only be answered as the SEATC management meets with regional employers and representatives of UAS and SJC. It is possible, for example, that the tribal college could offer specific classes within the UAS and SJC degree programs, at least to the extent that a Native perspective is seen as an advantage in the workplace for those degree/certificate seekers. Even apart from this kind of cooperative programming, I believe there is a niche for the Southeast Alaska Tribal College. Of course, the only way to prove this is to create the tribal college.

On a related note, I have observed

an interesting phenomenon in recent years, and I think it warrants a comment. The University of Alaska Southeast and Sheldon Jackson College, along with other colleges, universities and non-profit organizations in Alaska, continue to receive what will amount to many millions of dollars to recruit and retain Native students, train Native teachers, create curriculum that reflects Alaska Native values and to help largely Native districts improve their schools. These grants to "Alaska Native Serving Institutions" are almost always directed by non-Native individuals who, though good, honest people, do not have the whole benefit of our Native and tribal perspective. Plus, you have to ask yourself, when are we going to get to the point where these millions of dollars for Native programs will actually be provided to and controlled by tribal, Native organizations and insti-



*Sheldon Jackson College campus, Allen Auditorium*

tutions? We have made tremendous progress toward self-governance in areas like housing, health and social welfare; but in education we seem to lag behind. Perhaps I am too impatient and lack perspective. Then again, maybe this state of affairs needs to change and a tribal college is the best way to get there from here. ✖

# Athabascan Region

## What is happening in Old Minto this Summer?

In May and June, the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute (CHEI) will begin a project to improve the physical infrastructure in Old Minto to provide better shelter for the Elders while they participate in cultural heritage camps as well as create an environment conducive to year-round programs.

We have been fundraising for this project for over a year and were fortunate to secure a top-off grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust in November 2000 which ensures funding for ten log-sided cabins. In addition, we are planning to construct a rustic dining area and kitchen facility. We are grateful for support from the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, the CIRI Heritage Foundation, the Rasmuson Foundation, Nenana Lumber and numerous local contributors too many to mention here! We have funding for the materials, but this is an ambitious project and we still need some help in the form of volunteer labor.

We are seeking service groups that would like to "adopt a cabin" and help build it; volunteers with construction skills or interested in learning construction; cooks familiar with outdoor cooking for a group; use of a small cat to clear land; donations or use of a generator, skill saw, drills, hand tools, vapor barriers, ten boxes each of eight- and sixteen-penny galvanized nails, food, gas and oil. Cash contributions are also welcome (tax exempt). CHEI will provide transportation from Nenana and food. All involved will be our invited guests for Potlatch Day in Old Minto on June 15.

CHEI offers cultural heritage camps for groups interested in cross-cultural learning and experiences. With these upgrades we hope to have a full camp

season. The Cross-Cultural Orientation Camp is planned for June 9–16, 2001. Contact Ray Barnhardt at UAF for more information about this course.

We can arrange camps for diverse groups, classes, meetings, retreats, workshops or other gatherings. Individuals can also attend one of our scheduled camps, depending on space availability.

For more information, contact:

CHEI  
P.O. Box 73030  
Fairbanks, AK 99707  
907-451-0923  
chei@mosquionet.com  
www.ankn.uaf.edu/chei.

CHEI is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the Athabascan way of life and sharing it with others. We hope to see you in Old Minto this summer! ✨

## UAF Summer 2001 Program in Cross-Cultural Studies for Alaskan Educators

The Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, Alaska Staff Development Network, UAF Summer Sessions and Bristol Bay Campus invite educators from throughout Alaska to participate in a series of two- and three-credit courses focusing on the implementation of the Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools. The courses may be taken individually or as a six-, nine- or twelve-credit sequence. The first three courses may be used to meet the state multicultural education requirement for licensure, and all may be applied to graduate degree programs at UAF.

*Rural Academy for Culturally Responsive Schools*  
May 26–30, 2001, Bristol Bay Campus, Dillingham, Alaska

*Cross-Cultural Orientation Program for Teachers*  
June 4–22, 2001 at UAF campus and Old Minto Camp

*Native Ways of Knowing*  
June 25–July 13, 2001 at UAF campus

*Place-Based Education*  
July 16–Aug. 3, 2001 at UAF campus

For further information about the Rural Academy, contact the UAF Bristol Bay Campus at 907-842-5483, 907-842-5692 (fax) or the Alaska Staff Development Network at 2204 Douglas Highway, Suite 100, Douglas, Alaska 99824, 907-364-3801 or 907-364-3805 (fax), e-mail: asdn@ptialaska.net, web site <http://www.asdn.org>.

For further information on the other courses offered in Fairbanks, please contact UAF Summer Sessions office at 907-474-7021 or on the web at <http://www.uaf.edu/summer>. ✨

# Iñupiaq Region

## News from Northwest Alaska

by Branson Tungiyán

I would like to express my deep and sincere appreciation for having the opportunity to serve the people of the Bering Strait Region for the past two years at Kawerak. The next five years will be even more challenging as the regional coordinator for the Iñupiaq Region—from Unalakleet to Point Barrow. But, as long as it means helping the Native community, the school kids and the people, it makes the challenges a lot less, knowing that this is for the benefit of Alaska Natives.

I have been working at Kawerak, Inc. for the past two years as the program director for the Eskimo Heritage Program. The mission statement of the Eskimo Heritage Program is “to document and preserve the Bering Strait Region’s culture, heritage and traditions of the three Native groups and to expand the Eskimo Heritage Program’s collection to the people and the villages.”

I have been working on individual Elder interviews and putting them into a computerized database. This has been like attending a bilingual education class, as I go through the transcriptions of all the wonderful stories, legends and traditional knowledge that each Elder exemplifies in their interviews. To me, this is truly the “link from the past, to the present and to the future.” Whether the interviews are from an Iñupiaq Elder, Central Yup’ik Elder or a St. Lawrence Island Yupik Elder, the cultural values spoken are the same.

This brings me to the new position I am involved in with the AFN/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI). Phase II of AKRSI is “bringing schools and communities together in rural Alaska.” This will be done by implementing the ten initiatives on a re-

gion-by-region basis over the next five years. For example, the Iñupiaq Region will be working on the Village Science Applications and Alaska Native Science and Engineering Society (ANSES) this year. The Iñupiat have already gone through some of this by attending cultural camps and working on their science fair projects with the Elders in the communities and

with the schools in the districts.

The AKRSI is about education, working with the community, the schools and the children. This not only involves the children in the villages in the school districts, but also the youth in the tribal colleges. We will also be working with Native educators within each respective region. The focus of the AKRSI Phase II will build on the successes of the initiatives that were implemented in Phase I.

Culture is the core of every Native group in this great state of Alaska. It brings the true meaning of being Alaska Native. The ability to have survived the harsh environment and climate over thousands of years proves that culture is the core of any Native group that sustains the life of its people. This gives the people heritage and tradition as an identity to continue and pass on to generation after generation for its survival as indigenous people. It gives me pleasure to be working as a part of this process with my fellow Alaska Natives. ✨

## Welcome to the New Regional Coordinators

from Frank Hill, Oscar Kawagley and Ray Barnhardt,  
Co-Directors of Alaska RSI

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the AKRSI family for Branson Tungiyán (Nome), John Angaiak (Bethel) and Velma Schafer (Fairbanks), as well as a welcome back for Andy Hope (Juneau) and Teri Schneider (Kodiak). These people have taken on the role of regional coordinator for their respective regions as we move into Phase II of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. We also thank the regional non-profits for taking on the responsibility of coordinating the AKRSI activities across their cultural regions, along with the sponsorship of the regional tribal college initiatives. We look forward to a strong and continuing partnership with the Elders, communities and schools throughout rural Alaska. Contact information for each of the regional coordinators is provided on page nine of this newsletter. ✨

# Yup'ik Region

## Alaska Native Village Education

by John P. Angaiak

*John's article was first published in Tundra Drums, October 19, 2000, vol 28 number 31.*

**W**hen and where do we begin? On education, I think we know when to start — at the birth of a child and it does not matter where on earth you live. The philosophy of education is highly politicized and emotional today. Along the way, parents learn that the way a child views education early on is a mirror image of the way his parents look at it. The child's attitude toward education is reflective of the attitude of his/her parents.

There is more than one way to look at education. It is a personalized, family affair. Some parents sacrifice their time and effort for the education of their children. Others may look at it only as an alternative option to subsistence, or enough to get by. It seems that we develop a better perception of education when we get older. Adults have a better understanding of how it was then and how it is now.

I grew up with a strong subsistence-oriented education, though I entered Western schooling before 1950. The first school in my village was a BIA school. Our parents only had what they learned from their own hands and subsistence experience. Their kind of education was learning skills for survival. For boys, it was knowledge of a vast area of terrain, hunting skills, the sea and weather. To know these skills meant being a good provider for their family. The girls mastered skills from their mothers on how to make *mukluks* and parkas, to sew, prepare food and take care of hunting needs. The girls knew how to complement what their husbands provided. They were partners for life. All this was obtained by hands-on experience from their parents and Elders, so clear that their children

knew what they would become in the next decade.

When Western education arrived, it did not change who I was as a person. It created an opportunity to expand my subsistence education. It meant that I could strive to master a subsistence education and master Western education too—to survive in a different lifestyle. We will always be Alaska Natives and speak more than one language, regardless of where we are living. We will always be attached to a subsistence lifestyle. In fact, modern education helps you better understand subsistence, to appreciate it, to understand its weaknesses and strengths and, above all, how it defines who you are.

Our attitude toward Western education should not be different from subsistence education. We should treat them both equally as important to our survival. They should complement each other. It is here that I want to make my point. Western education is here to stay. We should make the best of it and take advantage of it. There is no way getting around it.

The facts, figures and politics of education are not what I want to talk about. It is about our general attitude. I believe we need not fear for the

future of our children anymore. Sometimes what we say at statewide gatherings on education is not what we say about education at home. We pass resolutions directing our leaders to solve our Native education problems. We seem to blame the system for our weaknesses.

Somewhere in the corner of each village, silent parents reside whose children are known to be above the norm in school. The parents never seem to do anything different, but they make sure their children are dressed well for winter, eat well, do their homework and are in bed by nine o'clock. They don't blame the system.

What makes the silent parents different? They truly give attention to their children. They talk to them freely, all in their Yup'ik language, because they never went to school. They encourage their children to excel in school, listen to the teachers, do homework and go to bed on time. Such parents believe education starts at home. They want their children to have better opportunities. The children feel comfortable. The children are encouraged to feel that they could go far with a good education. Parents are right there with them. Education is fun. Parents give their children the right attitude and the freedom to be educated in subsistence and beyond. The children feel they can now return all the love and care their parents gave. It is about respect between parents and children.

These parents have never been to the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention. They were too poor and could not afford all the conveniences of the modern life. They only knew how to provide for their children the best they could. Their reward was that most of their children graduated from the universities and all have jobs now. These traditional parents never liked to be confused with the philosophies of education. They would lose their

sense of direction when people of high thinking started talking about the best way to educate children. Their rules were simple: to read, write and excel in mathematics and science. Beyond that, it was elective.

To read, write and excel in mathematics and science are the core of a universal education. All the children of the world are being drawn to the core, down to the smallest village. Education is here to stay.

Our ancestors were committed to making sure their children knew how to provide for their own so that they would survive in their time. We should have the same grasp about survival today as our ancestors did about surviving in their time. This century belongs to our children. They should fit well in this century. As parents, our time was yesterday.

What about the changing world all around us? We may someday need two earths to sustain the world population with its staggering growth rate. The explosive world population is now on the move everywhere. Most often its masses are highly educated. They can take jobs in our villages while we can't make up our minds about educating our children for future jobs. Everywhere around the world people are talking about survival, at any cost.

If we don't change our attitudes toward education now, we cannot be partners with the rest of the changing world. Education will not change our status as Alaska Natives, but it will gain us respect for our unique culture as an educated society and help us to be partners in the changing world. We have to make a move on education. We should not corner ourselves in our own villages. The world has nothing for us unless we take education seriously. We should not lose our language, the way we do things and who we are. Such an education is not for the privileged few. It's okay to be educated twice. ✨

## Yup'ik Science Fair Report

by Yurliq Nita Rearden

L KSD and Alaska Federation of Natives had an agreement to work with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative to sponsor an AISES (American Indian Science & Engineering Society) Science Fair in the Yup'ik Region. On January 25 and 26 a Yup'ik science fair took place at the cultural center. I coordinated the fair. Out of ten school districts in the Central Yup'ik region, only two participated: Kuspuk and LKSD. We had two groups representing LKSD. Teacher Jeff Ralston brought two students from Mekoryuk and teacher Nicole Pugh worked with two students from Bethel Regional Junior High. Kuspuk School District had a total of five entries from Crooked Creek and Upper Kalskaq. The teachers, Elizabeth Ruff and Shannon O'Brien, chaperoned their students. There were a total of seven projects.

I want to share my experience and thoughts while working with teachers from LKSD. Julie McWilliams, Health and Science Education Specialist from the Academics Department, helped with the fair handbook and communicated with the science teachers trying to spark their interest in the fair. I was happy to work with Julie sharing ideas and information about how vital it is to have our teachers understand the environmental resources available for Native science experiments. We received some information from the teachers that the time to produce a finished project was limited for the fair. Yet, some also had problems in getting information from Elders in the communities, or did not know how to go about it. In addition, since our district is focused on benchmark testing for reading, writing and math, science teachers may have thought that they don't have the time to participate. It sounded like a Na-

tive science fair was just another thing to do!

There seems to be some missing linkage for bridging Western science education from a Yup'ik world. Yup'ik culture has many science resources and experiences that students attain while growing up in their subsistence life style. Unfortunately, not all students experience subsistence activities in their villages due to changing circumstances. The whole environment of a student includes survival skills, geographical knowledge of the area, subsistence fishing and hunting and weather as well as the home environment, where a student may learn to make items such as clothing and subsistence material made from natural resources. The students learn their Native knowledge well by the time they reach the upper elementary level or junior high, if given the opportunity. The information that the

*(continued on back page)*

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students learn is usually embedded in their knowledge for the rest of their lives. This is a real science life!

The question is how do we connect the teachers who are not from our region to students' prior knowledge from growing up in the LKSD region? I think one of the ways would be to revisit Yuuyaraq curriculum and have the Yup'ik teachers work with the science teachers at their sites. Another idea would be to allow teachers to observe and work with local resource teachers to learn, understand and comprehend the knowledge that the Elders and students share at cultural camps.

When I mentioned the idea of revisiting the Yuuyaraq curriculum to Bev Williams, she indicated that she wanted to look for funding to make the idea work. Julie McWilliams mentioned that she would like to research raising benchmark testing by working with teachers using hands-on science. I'm glad to see support coming from the Academics Department. It will take a group effort to make these

ideas work. LKSD provides support for activities that help students learn in a meaningful way.

Just imagine Robert Bujan and Amanda Williams, the students from Nuniwaarmiut School in Mekoryuk who participated in the Native science fair: they now have life-long memories and knowledge about tanning reindeer. They will be sharing their findings with the community by demonstrating which is the best tanning solution to use on the reindeer skins. The students received the grand prize award at the regional fair and again at the state level. They will now have a chance to participate at the National AISES Science Fair! Another group of students who received a grand prize award from the Yup'ik region were from Crooked Creek with a project about hypothermia titled, "A Cold Body." The two students, William Felker and Elena John, also won at the state level and will go to the national competition. The knowledge that the students learned and shared is valued by Elders in the community to help them understand and

improve the lifestyles in the villages.

I would also like to congratulate and thank the second- and third-place winners for participating in the fairs: "The Energy of Light" with Mae Mute, Jennifer Frink and Mane Darris; "On Fire" with Nastasia Andrianoff and Roxanne Sakar; "When the Lights Go Out" with Jessica Athanas and Elizabeth Dostert; "Chills of the Camp Fire" with Leona Inman and "We Drink It: Water!" with Raymond Parent. Most importantly, I want to let the teachers who took the time to work with their students know they are greatly appreciated! Elder judges for the Yup'ik Region Native Science Fair were Peter Gilila from Tuluksak and Cecilia Martz from Bethel. Science judges were Claudette Bradley and Gene Peltola. Community members of Bethel, including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lower Kuskokwim School District and Bethel Regional High School are also thanked for their involvement. *Quyana cakneq tamarpetci!* ✨

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