



# 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

## Documenting Indigenous Knowledge and Languages: Research Planning & Protocol

### Introduction

by Beth Leonard

I have been preparing a research proposal for the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program at UAF that focuses on "Athabaskan Oral Traditions: Deg Hit'an<sup>1</sup> Narratives and Native Ways of Knowing." Much of my current research and language learning centers on kinship and (personal) family histories. Hopefully this research will serve dual purposes in terms of both academic significance and potential value to the Deg Hit'an community.

Research by indigenous researchers for the benefit of indigenous communities also dovetails with political/postmodern movements of self-determination, autonomy and cultural regensis. Maori researcher, Linda Smith (1999) states: "The cultural and  
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1. The term Deg Hit'an ("local people" or "people from around here") is used to refer to the people of Anvik, Shageluk and Holy Cross. Osgood (1936) and subsequently the 1982 ANLC Native Languages map used "Ingalik" which is not a Deg Hit'an word but a Yupi'k word meaning "lice infested."



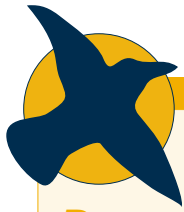
### Guidelines for Strengthening Indigenous Languages

This booklet offers suggestions for Elders, parents, children and educators to use in strengthening their heritage language with support from the Native community, schools, linguists and education agencies. 28 pages, free.

For more information on obtaining copies of these and other cultural guidelines, call the Alaska Native Knowledge Network at 907-474-5086 or e-mail [dixie.dayo@uaf.edu](mailto:dixie.dayo@uaf.edu). ✨

### Contents

Documenting Indigenous Knowledge and Languages .....	1
Guidelines Adopted for Libraries .....	6
Guidelines For Alaska Public Libraries .....	7
Gail Pass Moves On .....	8
Parenting & Teaching .....	9
Alutiiq/Unangax Region: Re-establishing Illuani .....	10
Athabaskan Region: Annual Field Trip for the Minto Flats Cultural Atlas .....	11
Alaska Native Education Summit .....	12
Southeast Region: Opening the Box of Knowledge .....	13
Yup'ik Region: Calista Elders Council Expands Services .....	14
One Among Others .....	16



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linguistic revitalization movements have tapped into a set of cultural resources that have recentred the roles of indigenous women, of Elders, and of groups who had been marginalized through various colonial practices" (p. 111). Although some Deg Hit'an Elders were recorded during the Alaska Native Literature Project and more recently during the development of *Deg Xinag Dindlidik: Deg Xinag Literacy Manual* there remain several Elders who have not had a chance to record traditional stories and/or lend their perspectives to the history of this area. Deg Hit'an narratives will be valuable as language maintenance efforts proceed and more emphasis is placed on integrating Native knowledge and history into the school curriculum through projects such as the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative.

### Researcher's Background

I grew up in Shageluk, Alaska, an Athabascan village on the Innoko River located in the lower-middle Yukon area. I also spent four years in neighboring Anvik, a village on the Yukon approximately 30 miles from Shageluk. My father is James Dementi of Shageluk, a multilingual speaker of Deg Xinag and Holikachuk Athabascan and English. My mother, Jean Dementi, who died in 1988, was a non-Native woman who came to Alaska from California as an Episcopal nurse-evangelist. In 1976 she became Alaska's first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal church.

Due to a variety of socio-historical influences, most people of my generation did not learn to speak Athabascan. Both the early Episcopal church missionaries and the territorial and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools mandated English and parents had been told not to teach their children

the Athabascan language. During the time I lived in Shageluk and Anvik, there were no Athabascan language programs in place in either the school or community. I do, however, remember the first linguists from the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) who came to the Shageluk area to work with speakers during the early 1970s. My father and other relatives often worked as consultants in these early language documentation and translation efforts. This contradiction in Native language status, i.e. continuing suppression of local language and culture by churches and schools versus promotion by prestigious outside academic interests, conveyed ambiguous and confusing messages to communities struggling to maintain their local cultures.

### Barriers and Challenges in Language Learning

In my current role as language learner—along with other language learners from the Deg Hit'an area—I find myself struggling with the best way to learn the Deg Xinag language and share the knowledge I have documented. Although many of us as language learners work directly with linguists, obvious differences between English and Deg Xinag Athabascan are not articulated and we (the learners) are forced to stumble along as best we can. I believe this is due in part to the lack of knowledge of the deeper Athabascan cultural contexts and constructs and the failure to document language beyond the lexical and grammatical levels.

I was an undergraduate linguistics student when I began my study of Deg Xinag. At that time I had no experience in learning a non-European language and was accustomed to being taught conversational language by experienced teachers using immersion methods. I was also used to

having an extensive collection of practical dictionaries and grammars at my disposal to assist in the learning process. Although there is not a published grammar for Deg Xinag, there are materials that can be used for language learning. To date, publications include one set of verb lessons, a language curriculum for elementary students, one literacy manual, two books of traditional stories, several short children's stories and a limited collection of supplemental learning materials. The verb lessons explain the linguistic structures at an elementary level for language learners, however, as stated above, significant cultural constructs and concepts are not addressed.

Through my academic coursework I would often run across barriers to

my own self-confidence in being able to someday speak Deg Xinag fluently. For instance, there is a whole body of research on second language acquisition that says if learning begins after adolescence, the learner cannot expect to become fully fluent in the second language. In a similar vein, linguists often describe Athabascan "as one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn," thereby insinuating that one needs to be of above-average intelligence to indeed even attempt such a process. As a learner and student I have been questioned as to the potential for true authenticity (purity) of Athabascan when learned as a second language and whether or not I think the "back velars"<sup>2</sup> will drop out of the language.

I began my own language learning

by asking for phrases in the languages and listening to taped narratives and literacy exercises. I also would sit down with my father and go through sections of the noun dictionary to find the literal meanings of words. I found that, although writing and studying written language is not considered the best way to learn conversational language, it provided a base for further understanding of the language structure and helped with learning the sound system. I continue my study of conversational language through regular interactions with various members of my immediate and extended family. Sometimes this learning takes place in more formal environments such as the ANL 121/122 audioconferences or Athabascan Language Development Institute's on-campus classes. On most occasions this learning takes place through

*(continued on next page)*

2. Deg Xinag back velars are written with "kk" and "gg," for example, here is a minimal pair which represents both the front and back velars "gag" (berry) and "ggag" (animal).

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### Deg Xinag

Sidithniqay James Dementi, Jean yił xivi'ezre'. Sito' Didlang Tochagg nadheyonh. Vidadr (sivadr) Katherine, Susan, Louise yił xivi'ezre'. Katherine Dzox-tsey dhido. Katherine vichoy Patrick viyix dhido yił. Louise viqing' Richard yił Qay Xuchux xiditl'tth'e. Sito' vichidl (sitoy) Gilbert vi'ezre'. Gilbert vi'ot Eleanor yił Cantwell xiditl'tth'e.

Singonh California nadheyonh. Vichidl (sidhi'a) Keith, Don yił xivi'ezre'. Don vi'ot Lucille yił Santa Barbara California xiditl'tth'e. Vidadr (siq'oy) Yvonne vi'ezre'. Yvonne viqing' Richard yił Redding California xiditl'tth'e.

Sitsiy Charlie Cikal Dementi, Charles Aubrey yił xivi'ezre'. Sitsiy Charlie Dementi Dishkaket nadheyonh. Sitsey Lena Phillips Dementi, Ruth Aubrey yił xivi'ezre'. Sitsey Lena Dementi łeggijitno', Nilteghelinghdi' yił nadheyonh. Sitsey viyil xethdlan Clara, Albert xivi'ezre'.

Beth Dementi-Leonard si'ezre'. Deg Hit'an itlanh. łeggijitno', Dzox-tsey, Qay Xuchux, Gitr'ingithchagg xinasionh. University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Education q'u'isineyh. Siqing' Michael Leonard vi'ezre'. Clear AFS q'u'idineyh. Siyotr'a' Samantha vi'ezre'. Fairbanks tr'iditl'tth'e.

### English

My parents are James and Jean Dementi. My father grew up in Swiftwater (on the Innoko River). His younger sisters (my aunts—father's side) are Katherine, Susan and Louise. Katherine lives in (new) Shageluk. Her grandson Patrick lives at her house also. Louise and her husband Richard live in Anchorage. My father's younger brother (my uncle—father's side) is Gilbert. Gilbert and his wife Eleanor live in Cantwell.

My mother grew up in California. Her younger brothers (my uncles—mother's side) are Keith and Don. Don and his wife Lucille live in Santa Barbara. Her younger sister (my aunt—mother's side) is Yvonne. Yvonne and her husband Richard live in Redding, California.

My grandfathers are Charlie Cikal Dementi and Charles Aubrey. Charlie Dementi grew up in Dishkaket. My grandmothers are Lena Phillips Dementi and Ruth Aubrey. Lena Dementi grew up in Old Shageluk and Lower Village. Her siblings are Clara and Albert.

My name is Beth Dementi-Leonard. I am Deg Hit'an Athabascan. I grew up in Old Shageluk, New Shageluk, Anchorage and Anvik. I work for the UAF School of Education. My husband's name is Michael Leonard. He works at Clear AFS. My daughter's name is Samantha. We live in Fairbanks.

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informal interaction with speakers through visits or phone conversations. I still use a variety of learning methodologies, including writing the language on a regular basis.

One of the more popular ways to teach/learn language involves a

between the Deg Hit'an and Holikachuk areas, so many speakers have command of at least two Athabaskan languages. As multilingual speakers, they are aware of our difficulties in learning these languages and are able to provide the context we often ignore. I have observed that in

learner, literal translations provide a great deal of fascinating cultural information and further impetus for investigation into one's own culture. For example, the Deg Xinag words for birds, fish, animals and plants reflect complex and scientific beliefs and observations (Fig. 1.)

Fig. 1.

English	Deg Xinag	Literal Translation
black bear	<i>ggagg gichidl</i>	animal its/the little brother
otter	<i>tixet'an (te xut'an?)</i>	water people (?)
water snipe	<i>teyeg</i>	water spirit/shadow (its shadow reflects on the water?)
junco	<i>legg ney</i>	"fish" it says (the junco calls when salmon are coming)
yellow pond lilly	<i>vichingadh ethog</i>	muskrat's plate
raven	<i>yixgitsiy</i>	your (plural) grandfather
rusty blackbird	<i>yixgitsiy vozra</i>	raven his nephew
puffball mushroom	<i>yixgitsiy notchildl</i>	raven's (sewing) bag

method called Total Physical Response (TPR). In English this would require the use of the imperative mode to give a series of commands which require some action on the part of the learner, e.g. come here, open the window, close the door, etc. In Deg Xinag, however, many of these do not equate to commands but describe instead what the subject is doing. In the case of "wake up" for instance (when speaking to a child), a more appropriate way to express this in Deg Xinag is "*Xetedz tr'aningidhit he'?*" which translates to "Are you waking up good?" Examples such as these reflect the deeper value system, i.e., a gentle way of relating to children as they awake.

I am continually impressed with the Deg Xinag speakers' command of English and Athabaskan and their strength and resilience considering the damage that has been done since contact. In the past there was a great deal of travel and intermarriage

immersion or partial immersion situations, speakers will adapt their use of language so as to not totally overwhelm, but assist learners through individual levels of learning by varying the complexity of their speech.

### Language Learner As Researcher

"Alaska Native worldviews are oriented toward the synthesis of information gathered from interaction with the natural and spiritual worlds so as to accommodate and live in harmony with natural principles and exhibit the values of sharing, cooperation, and respect" (Kawagley, 11).

Kawagley's observations about Alaska Native worldviews are reflected in my initial research with the *Ingalik Noun Dictionary*. In reviewing this dictionary with my father, I found that the literal translations were not included. For a beginning language

### Culturally Appropriate and Respectful Ways of Language Learning

Learners, like myself, who do not have latent knowledge of the language, use a translation approach. Often we inadvertently ask for words or phrases for concepts that do not exist, or concepts that are expressed in very different ways in this cultural context. Learners also tend to provide an incomplete or sometimes total lack of context when requesting words or phrases. As English speakers, we nominalize and decontextualize many concepts, without realizing that Athabaskan is a dynamic, verb-based language.

One example of differences between Deg Xinag and English categorization reflects the way one would say "Where are you/where is it?" *Xidanh* is used when referring to people (e.g. *Xidanh si'ot?*—Where is my wife?), whereas *xiday* is used to refer to an animal or object (*Xiday sileg?*—Where is my dog? or *Xiday sigizr?*—Where are my mittens?) The same is true for counting people, animals or objects (*nit'tayh/nittay*). From what Deg Xinag speakers have said, using these words for "where" and "how many" show respect toward animals who might be offended if the wrong reference is used. This reflects a context of care and respect for animal spirits and other non-human spirits present in the environment, as well as the power of the spoken word.

Fig. 2.

<i>Deg Xinag</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Literal Translation</i>
<i>Dranh ngi'egh ityoth.</i>	It's snowing outside today.	Today outside it is snowing.
<i>Getiy ghil'yoth.</i>	It really snowed.	Really it snowed.
<i>Chen ititlyoth.</i>	It started to snow again.	Again it started to snow.
<i>Chen nititlyoth.</i>	It's started to snow again.	Again it's started to snow.

When learners request generic phrases for weather, for instance, it can be difficult for speakers to provide this information when not given a particular context. A more holistic context might provide the following information:

- whether a phenomena is happening now, a little while ago, yesterday, last week, etc.
- if a phenomena is/was happening for the first time during the specified time period, or is/was beginning again
- variations in intensity—a little, very hot/really windy, etc.

These limited examples gathered by members of the language class reflect both major and subtle changes in context (Fig. 2.)

## Documenting Oral Sources and Research Issues

I write down new words and phrases gathered from speakers in my family during phone or face-to-face conversations and audioconference classes. I also record speakers (with their permission) when possible and have several tapes of recorded audioconference classes as well as phrase lists. In the past, I had not really thought about the proper way to obtain permission to record information either in writing or with audiovisual equipment. Often I would ask if I could record, but assumed the speakers knew I would use this information for learning purposes. Now I realize that there are a great many

issues to deal with when documenting in writing or with audio/visual equipment, including:

- Who should have ownership of audio/visual materials?
- How will the material be used?
- How will the material be cared for?
- Where should materials be stored?
- Who should have access to the materials?

## "Just Speak Your Language"

Lately, it seems the endangered languages bandwagon is a popular vehicle for access to "other," providing many opportunities for publication through description and analysis of various Native language revitaliza-

tion programs. Outside researchers continue to debate the authenticity and effectiveness of projects and programs from non-indigenous perspectives. Language revitalization, instead of being viewed holistically within social and cultural contexts, is often treated as strictly a linguistic venture, i.e. "just speak your language." "Just speaking your language" assumes abilities and resources are available to assist in this process. It involves learning cultural constructs and concepts often hidden in translation along with a myriad of other environmental, ideological and personal factors. Fortunately there are now indigenous educational models providing examples of contextual/situational learning that can be applied at a local grass-roots level.

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Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books Ltd. ✨

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# Guidelines Adopted for Alaska Public Libraries

by David Ongley

The state of indigenous librarianship is stirring across regions in Alaska. There is yet a long way to go. Many villages have no public libraries. For those that do, there is no centralized planning effort. Village libraries frequently consist of a few shelves of books in a village council office. Funding for staff and collections is usually far from adequate. Funds for operations are almost nonexistent. Staff rarely work full time and usually have few benefits. Most have little or no training in librarianship and work in relative isolation.

We are fortunate on the North Slope to have public libraries in all of our villages. We only have seven villages outside of Barrow though. AVCP in Bethel is working to form libraries in many of the 50 or so villages it serves. I hear of good things coming from Southeast Alaska as well. Sealaska and the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes both recently received grants for library projects, as did Igiugig Village in the Cook Inlet area. Haines public library is working on a large project with the Chilkoot Indian Association. For the most part, however, very little is being done in larger towns and cities.

Each year, the Alaska State Library hosts a three-day leadership institute that is fondly referred to as DirLead. Last October the directors of the 10 largest public libraries in the state met to learn ways they could better serve Alaska Natives in their libraries. As this was a significant departure from previous DirLead institutes, much credit needs to go to Karen Crane, the director of the State Library and several other key people, who immediately perceived the value of what was being proposed and pro-

vided firm support for the project.

Father Michael Oleksa spoke for half a day about communication styles. For the next day and a half, Dr. Lotsee Patterson, a Comanche professor of library science at the University of Oklahoma, a preeminent expert on Native libraries across the country, worked with us to develop a set of guidelines for public libraries. These guidelines were based on those for schools, communities, teachers and parents already developed by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

Immersion in the subject under Dr. Patterson's tutelage provided the intellectual stimulus that propelled the formation of smaller workgroups to consider four aspects of libraries where guidelines could be developed: the environment in which services are delivered, the programs and services offered, the collections that are developed and the staff that is employed in the library.

Reassembling, the smaller groups brought proposed wording back. Revisions by the larger group were considerable. Work progressed quickly under Lotsee's direction. Directors took copies of the document to share

with their libraries, communities and Native educational organizations. Feedback was sporadic and continued to trickle in through the spring of 2001. The changes that were suggested were forwarded to the entire group through their listserv. Almost every suggestion that came in improved the document and was easily incorporated into the wording. By June the document was completed to almost everyone's satisfaction. That document is now on the ANKN Web site at [www.ankn.uaf.edu/standards/library.html](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/standards/library.html).

I believe several basic truths about libraries. I believe that, while books and libraries may have the appearance and tradition of a fundamental component of a white, European, imperialist institution, their equivalents exist in every culture in some form. I believe that by taking control of libraries and filling them with appropriate information, they can be transformed into institutions that serve people in the villages.

In Alaska, we struggle on two fronts: getting libraries established in the villages and convincing the state legislature of the need to support them. Convincing a legislature dominated by representatives from the major urban areas of the importance of rural libraries is an uphill battle. It will probably remain a losing battle without the overwhelming support from the villages. I'm certain that the importance of libraries will eventually prevail and they will emerge as a force for cultural, linguistic, historic and economic independence in the future.

On September 21, 2001 at the State Board of Education meeting, it was moved by board member Roy Nageak of Barrow to endorse the *Culturally Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries*. The endorsement was approved unanimously. Those guidelines are included for use in your community. ✨

# Culturally-Responsive Guidelines For Alaska Public Libraries

Sponsored by the Alaska State Library with support and guidance from the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. © Alaska State Library 2001

## Preface

The *Culturally-Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries* were developed by a group of Alaskan library directors\* at a workshop facilitated by Dr. Lotsee Patterson and sponsored by the Alaska State Library. The goal of the workshop was to develop guidelines to help public librarians examine how they respond to the specific informational, educational and cultural needs of their Alaska Native users and communities. These guidelines are predicated on the belief that culturally appropriate service to indigenous peoples is a fundamental principle of Alaska public libraries and that the best professional practices in this regard are associated with culturally-responsive services, collections, programs, staff and library environment.

While the impetus for developing the guidelines was service to the Alaska Native community, as the library directors worked on the guidelines it became clear that they could be applied to other cultural groups resident in Alaska. The guidelines are presented as basic statements in four broad areas. The statements are not intended to be inclusive, exclusive or conclusive and thus should be care-

fully discussed, considered and adapted to accommodate local circumstances and needs.

The guidelines may be used to:

- Review mission and vision statements, goals, objectives and policies to assure the integration of culturally appropriate practice.
- Examine the library environment and atmosphere provided for all library users.

- Review staff performance as it relates to practicing culturally specific behavior.
- Strengthen the commitment to facilitating and fostering the involvement of members of the indigenous community.
- Adapt strategies and procedures to include culturally sensitive library practices.
- Guide preparation, training and orientation of library staff to help them address the culturally specific needs of their indigenous patrons.
- Serve as a benchmark against which to evaluate library programs, services and collections.

## Library Environment

- ◆ A culturally-responsive library is open and inviting to all members of the community.
  - ◆ A culturally-responsive library utilizes local expertise to provide culturally appropriate displays of arts, crafts and other forms of decoration and space design.
  - ◆ A culturally-responsive library makes use of facilities throughout the community to extend the library's mission beyond the walls of the library.
  - ◆ A culturally-responsive library sponsors ongoing activities and events that observe cultural traditions and provide opportunities to display and exchange knowledge of these traditions.
  - ◆ A culturally-responsive library involves local cultural representa-
- (continued on next page)*

### \* These guidelines were developed by:

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tives in deliberations and decision making for policies and programs.

## Services And Programs

- ◆ A culturally-responsive library holds regular formal and informal events to foster and to celebrate local culture.
- ◆ Culturally responsive programming involves members from local cultural groups in the planning and presentation of library programs.
- ◆ Culturally responsive programming and services are based on the expressed needs of the community.
- ◆ Culturally responsive programming recognizes and communicates the cultural heritage of the local area.
- ◆ Culturally responsive services reach out and adapt delivery to meet local needs.

## Collections

- ◆ A culturally-sensitive library provides assistance and leadership in teaching users how to evaluate material about cultural groups represented in its collections and programs.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library purchases and maintains collections that are sensitive to and accurately reflect Native cultures.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library seeks out sources of materials that may be outside the mainstream publishing and reviewing journals.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library seeks local community input and suggestions for purchase.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library incorporates unique elements of contemporary life in Native communities in Alaska such as food gathering activities and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) into its collection.

- ◆ A culturally-responsive library encourages the development and preservation of materials that document and transmit local cultural knowledge.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library makes appropriate use of diverse formats and technologies to gather and make available traditional cultural knowledge.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library develops policies for appropriate handling of culturally sensitive materials.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library reviews its collections regularly to insure that existing materials are relevant and appropriate.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive library collects materials in the languages used in its community when they are available.

## Library Staff

- ◆ The culturally-responsive library reflects the ethnic diversity of the local community in recruitment of library boards, administrators, staff and volunteers.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive staff recognizes the validity and integrity

- of traditional knowledge systems.
- ◆ Culturally-responsive staff is aware of local knowledge and cultural practices and incorporates it into their work. For example, hunting seasons and funeral practices that may require Native staff and patrons to be elsewhere, or eye contact with strangers, talkativeness or the discipline of children.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive staff is knowledgeable in areas of local history and cultural tradition.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive staff provides opportunities for patrons to learn in a setting where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive staff utilizes the expertise of Elders and culturally knowledgeable leaders in multiple ways.
- ◆ A culturally-responsive staff will respect the cultural and intellectual property rights that pertain to aspects of local knowledge.
- ◆ Culturally-responsive library staff members participate in local and regional events and activities in appropriate and supportive ways. ✨

## Gail Pass Moves On

We have been fortunate throughout the life of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative to have highly talented and dedicated staff to breath life into the work we are doing. One who has been with us nearly from the beginning and has provided much of the glue that holds everything together has been Gail Pass, administrative assistant at the AFN office of the AKRSI. Gail has provided critical technical skills essential to keeping track of the many activities sponsored by the project; she has also been a valuable contributor to the thinking that has gone into shaping that work. Evidence of her insightful perspective on the inner workings of the world in which we live is reflected in a poem found on the back page of this newsletter, which she has provided as a gift to all of us on her move to a new position as a financial analyst with Alaska Communications Systems. The staff of AKRSI want to express our appreciation to Gail for her faithful service-with-a-smile over the years and we wish her good fortune as she moves on to new opportunities in her life. We'll be calling on you, Gail . . . !



# Parenting & Teaching: One and the Same

*Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley*

*Waqaa,*

As I begin this article, I am reminded of the Yupiaq woman who had an irritated skin condition on her hands and was given a tube of ointment with an applicator. One night when she was awakened by the irritation, she reached over in the dark to retrieve the ointment and applied it to her hands. The next morning, she woke up and looked at her hands. She was astounded and bewildered. Her hands were completely red. She worried as to what was happening to her skin. She finally looked at the tube of ointment she had applied, and then laughed when she saw that it was a red Bingo dauber!

During the last century or so, we, as parents and teachers, have been working blindly just as this woman because of the promises of the American Dream—promises of a quality education, a good job, a good home, earning top dollars and getting promotions. We have become Americanized to a high degree. In the process, we have been losing our Native languages and cultures. A recent newspaper article suggests that our Native languages are eroding and many will be gone within a generation. Will we, as parents and teachers, allow this to happen? Historically the American way has encouraged the loss of Native languages and cultures. The English language and its cultures continue to have a very voracious appetite and will devour our Native languages and cultures if we allow it.

In the past, our children were born in a sod house or a tent at spring camp or delivered under an overturned skin boat in an emergency. From the outset the newborn is introduced to the

voices of the family members, the words of the midwife, the hum of the wind, the sound of falling rain and the call of the Arctic loon. The newborn is already immersed in nature from its first moments of life. During the gestation period and after a given time, the child is talked to, sung to by the mother and exposed to family members eating, sleeping, doing work and playing. The child learns of the sounds peculiar to its parents' language, love and care bringing an indelible sense of belonging. The child is exposed to and lives within nature all its life. When the mother walks, the child is placed inside the parka on its mother's back. The child can then look around and see things from the same level as its mother and is treated as a beautiful living being.

As the child progresses through its growing stages, the parents, grandparents and community members assess the talents and inner strengths the child might have. These are nurtured with the thinking that the com-

munity will become greater with a responsible and caring member. As the child grows older, the members look for ideas that the child expresses, skills it shows, its interaction with others and its respect for everyone and everything.

There are rites of passage that are practiced as the child grows. The killing of a first mosquito, first pick of berries and other acts are times of joy by villagers and are reinforced by giving support and encouragement for continued growth, physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Puberty is a time of ceremony—the becoming of a woman or a man. First menstruation of a young lady is considered a time of power requiring that the young lady be housed apart and served only by the mother or grandmother for its duration. No work is required of her.

As the young person matures, the community members may ask the youngster: "Have you counted your blessings lately?" In actuality, they are asking: "Have you counted your inner values, talents, strengths, important relationships and connectedness?" This connectedness is spirituality. Knowing this about oneself will make one beneficial to the community.

With respect to discipline, the home must be a place of love, care, companionship and cooperation. If these are practiced, the child is well-behaved. If such ingredients are lacking in the home, how can the parents expect to discipline the child? If the home is dysfunctional, then where will the child find the love, care, attention and companionship they need? It is possible for a parent to be a teacher, but a teacher cannot really substitute for a parent, yet this is what we sometimes expect of the school. When teachers meet with parents, it is important that they encourage them to be loving, caring and

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# Alutiiq/UnangaĀ Region: Re-establishing Illuani

by Teri Schneider

Residents of the Kodiak Island area who remember the oral history magazine *Elwani*, were delighted to learn about a new publication that was produced by students through the Kodiak Island Borough School District. *Illuani* (same meaning and approximate pronunciation as the previous title) began to be distributed in June. Like the previous project, the latest version is a collection of interviews done of local people by high school students from our islands' communities. Featured in this latest version are Iver Malutin, Florence Pestrikoff, Susan Malutin, Ed Opheim, Sr. and the past coordinator of the project, Dave Kubiak. Students from Port Lions, Danger Bay, Old Harbor, Akhiok and Karluk completed the interviews and then worked with their site teachers and project coordinator, Eric Waltenbaugh, to transcribe the articles and create introductions. What a success! Not only are students learning writing skills, they build their skills for listening and communicating effectively across generations.

A few years ago people began to ask me, "What ever happened to *Elwani*? How come we don't see those around anymore?" As background information was gathered about the first effort, it became more and more apparent that we could re-establish the project with a few minor changes. *Illuani* could become a wonderfully

relevant learning tool while fulfilling the need to document people's knowledge and experience in our region of the world so that we could continue to communicate and celebrate the ingenuity and lives of each other. Like the magazine of the 70s and 80s, the school district is printing it, but the new one will be done primarily by rural stu-

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attentive to their child's needs and then the teacher should reinforce the parents attention.

As educators, we must try to make the classroom an environment where children can be with and of nature. Take them outdoors as much as possible. Have the children express their ideas of what is beautiful that they see

in nature; guide them to begin to see beauty in oneself and in others, in one's village or in one's neighborhood. The young person will then begin to see the value of their own Native language and culture. This is an invaluable asset in one's life. From this, you begin to see that "community/place is an experience that is created." *Quyana* ✨

dents with some contributions by interested students in Kodiak.

The night of the first interviews, held at the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, was a marvelous event. The students were nervous and the invited guests that were to be interviewed were unsure of their role and of what they might contribute. When the students went to their designated areas with their tape recorders, note pads and interviewees, magic happened. The project became a reality and took on a life of its own. Nobody needed prompting and nobody needed interventions by teachers. Giggles came from every corner as each group became engaged in conversation, often times sprinkled with humor to create a level of comfort for both the students and adults.

When we gather together with open ears, minds and hearts we allow ourselves to learn from one another. Perhaps we learn the value of taking care of your neighbor when we hear someone tell their story of the '64 earthquake or tidal wave. Maybe we learn to become more resourceful after hearing a story of how people used to bake bread on a beach in an oven made of rocks. Or, perhaps we learn that we never stop learning when we watch an Elder learn a new skill from a student. When we take the time to visit and listen we learn that each one of us has something to contribute to our community. *Illuani* is an example of students and community members contributing to each other's lives and in turn sharing that gift with all of us.

If you are interested in purchasing the new *Illuani* magazine you may contact the staff at the KIBSD Central Office (486-9210). All proceeds will go to supporting the continuation of the project. ✨

*Pronunciation key for article:*

*Sugtestun (Soog'-ts-toon):*

*the Sugpiaq/Alutiiq way*

*Elwani (el-wan'-ee): inside it*

*Illuani (il-lwhan'-ee): inside it*

# Athabascan Region:

## Moose Hunting and More: the Annual Field Trip for the Minto Flats Cultural Atlas

by Kathryn Swartz, Cultural Heritage and Education Institute

The sun was very warm and the sky was clear on the top of COD Hill on Saturday afternoon, September 22, 2001. A group of Elders and youth from Minto relaxed on the hill and looked for moose out in the Minto Flats. From this hill, one could see Denali in the distance and the ridges where the Nenana and Tolovana Rivers meet the Tanana River. "Shhhhh . . ." the Elders kept saying, "the animals will hear you up here." At one point, a raven stalked a juvenile bald eagle in the air below us. After looking for hours, Susie Charlie noticed a bull moose off to the east over by a little lake. A small group went down the hill and up the creek to walk into the area where the moose had been seen. We heard shots fired—the hunt was successful!

This event was the high point of the annual cultural atlas field trip with Minto Elders and youth. This year, the field trip employed seven Elders: Elsie Titus, Lige and Susie Charlie, Virgil and Vernell Titus, Luke Titus and Gabe Nollner. There were eleven students from the Minto School (Clinton Watson, Preston Alexander, Mitchel Alexander, Ezra Gibson, Amber Jimmie, Alanna Gibson, Carleen Charlie, Janis Frank, Lynnessa Titus, Dolly James and Justeena Silas), with their teachers Kraig Berg and Ruth Folger and the participation of Bill Pfisterer (education specialist) and Kathryn Swartz of the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute.

The Elders were the most important people on the field trip. They

decided where we were going, where we would stay and coordinated boat space for all the participants and sup-



*Elders, teachers, students and CHEI staff pose for a picture by the campfire.*

plies. They openly shared stories and tales of hunting, fishing, trapping and growing up in the Minto Flats. The Minto School played a valuable role in organizing the students, telling

them what they needed to take with them and also supporting the participation of two teachers. The information gathered on the trip will be incorporated into the school curriculum as students work on the development of a cultural atlas for the Minto Flats area (a preliminary version of the atlas can be viewed online at [www.ankn.uaf.edu/menhti](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/menhti).)

The field trip was held over a weekend and the group left Minto after school on Friday, September 21, 2001. The group went in five boats to Virgil Titus' fall camp along Washington Creek about an hour and a half from Minto. This camp faces to the east and south and is positioned above the creek in a nice wooded area. There is a spotting tree and good cranberry patch back in the woods. The first night everyone gathered around the fire and the reason for the field trip and the mapping work was explained. The Elders said they wanted to bring the kids out to learn the Athabascan way, to learn what they should bring on this kind of trip and to learn about the good places to hunt. The Elders shared some stories and memories about growing up in these areas. After some coaxing, all the kids finally went to bed. At night, the light from the radar station on Murphy Dome was visible from the camp and the Northern Lights shimmered.

The next morning, after breakfast, Bill Pfisterer showed the kids how to  
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use two cameras to document the places we would visit—one was a digital camera, the other a standard film camera. The group set off in boats to go down Washington Creek and up the Tatalina to begin the hike up COD Hill. The climb was tough, particularly for the Elders, but everyone made it. Rope was tied off on certain trees so you could get extra support and pull yourself up the hillside. The climb down was even worse with a slippery and dusty trail, but we were on our way to see the moose so no one seemed to mind the difficult descent. The moose was taken several bends up COD creek, back through willows and small birch trees in an open, grassy, swampy area. The participants witnessed field dressing the moose. Willows were laid down to hold the best cuts of meat, other parts were strung over the trees to dry while the work continued. The Elders shared traditional practices and techniques with the students and then the meat was packed out either with sticks or people put on raincoats and slung parts over their shoulders. The meat was left overnight near the river bank braced up with sticks or slung between trees. (In case anyone noticed the date, the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute had arranged for a cultural education permit to take a moose out of season.)

Saturday night was a beautiful evening with good food, more stories from the Elders and good laughs around the campfire. One of the students made cranberry sauce from freshly picked berries. That night, the temperature dropped and on Sunday morning as always, the first ones up, Virgil and Vernell Titus, started the fire and got warm water and coffee going. After breakfast several Elders including Lige Charlie and Luke Titus thanked everyone for attending and for the organization of the field trip. We headed back to retrieve the

moose meat and then made our way back up the winding sloughs, creeks and rivers to Minto. Ducks gathering for migration were scared up at every turn. The air was colder than it had been on Friday and it seemed that winter was now on its way.

This field trip was made possible thanks to support from the Rural School and Community Trust (Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative), the Minto School, the Alaska Humanities Forum, the New Voices Fellowship Program and the Skaggs Foundation. ✨



*Above: Elder Susie Charlie spots for moose on the flats. Below: The hunt is successful!*



## Alaska Native Education Summit 2001

Alaska Natives will soon have an opportunity to share their views on how to improve education for our children. The first Alaska Native Education Summit takes place November 30 and December 1 in Anchorage. It's being sponsored by the ANCSA Education Consortium and the First Alaskans Foundation.

This gathering of Alaska Native voices is the first step in looking for new ways to teach our young people the values and knowledge they must have to do well in their lives.

Unlike other meetings in the past, this one will focus on Alaska Native issues and begin the process to find Alaska Native solutions. We're looking for new people at the table who bring important Native perspectives and are willing to work hard to come up with fresh ideas that meet the needs of our children. This sum-

mit will draw together Native communities to develop plans that fit their situation and draw on their experience of what works and what does not. It will truly be a "grass roots" approach to providing quality education.

The summit is open to the public and we encourage all who care about this important issue to come and express their thoughts and perspectives. For more information contact Joan McCoy at 907-272-0839 or email [nes@nexusnw.com](mailto:nes@nexusnw.com). ✨



# Southeast Region: Opening the Box of Knowledge

by Andy Hope

Southeast MOA partners and tribal representatives met in Juneau the week of September 10, 2001 for a tribal watershed/GIS/cultural atlas workshop, a Southeast Alaska Tribal College organizational meeting and the planning meeting for the Southeast Native/Rural Education Consortium.



A number of key presenters were not able to make it to the watershed workshop because of flight restrictions, so we will try to get the group together again in mid-November.

The group participated in two teleconferences during the workshop. The first teleconference was with Jane Langill and Judith Roche of One Reel in Seattle to discuss the I Am Salmon curriculum project. Following is a brief description of the project:

## *I Am Salmon:*

### *International Educational Program*

A multidisciplinary, multilingual, multicultural, multinational educational program for educators and children in salmon cultures around the North Pacific Rim. Following a challenge from Dr. Jane Goodall in 1994 and an international writing project held in 1998 with schools in Seattle and Japan (*The Neverending Salmon Tale*), an international team of educators met at Sleeping Lady Conference Center in 1999 and developed a pilot project for schools in Alaska, Canada, Oregon, Washington, Japan and Russia. Schools are creating and sharing work in many disciplines on the theme of salmon in local culture. The multilingual "I Am Salmon E-Learning Website" launched September 2001.

Details can be obtained at [www.onereel.org/salmon](http://www.onereel.org/salmon).

## *From First Fish:*

### *One Reel's Wild Salmon Project*

One Reel had scheduled The Icicle River Children's Summit for September 19–23 in Leavenworth, Washington. Teachers and children from around the North Pacific Rim (including representatives from Washington State, British Columbia, Alaska, Japan and Kamchatka) were to meet for the first time to share materials and knowledge developed over the last two years. This meeting has been postponed, possibly until late spring of 2002. The Alaska representatives will be Inga Hanlon, a fifth grade teacher, and two of her students from Yakutat City School along with Lani Hotch, a high school teacher, and nine students from Klukwan School.

In the meantime, I will continue to work with our Alaska I Am Salmon partners to link with One Reel's new website, <http://iamsalmon.org>, to offer access to curriculum resources.

Our second teleconference was with Tom Thornton, who was stranded in Ontario, Canada on September 11. Tom serves as the director of the Southeast Alaska Native Place Name Project, which

serves as the foundation for the Cultural Atlas project in which tribes and school districts work in partnership to develop multimedia educational resources.

I am encouraged by the commitment of our respective partner school districts: Chatham School District (Klukwan and Angoon Schools) Hoonah City Schools, Sitka School District and Yakutat City Schools. Additionally, our tribal partners (Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Chilkat Indian village, Angoon Community Association and Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska) have immeasurably strengthened our effort. Juneau School District is a valuable partner that continues to support projects like I Am Salmon. Our next task will be to schedule a staff development workshop and a GIS consortium meeting to work on various curriculum projects. We will also begin building an I Am Salmon listserv in conjunction with the ANKN.

The events of September 11 overshadowed our meetings. The Southeast Alaska Tribal College organizational meeting was rescheduled for October. Though we weren't able to formally organize SEATC at this time, the people that did make it to Juneau decided to have a work session to develop recommendations for the SEATC trustees to consider when they finally do meet. The working group developed the following draft mission statement:

**"The mission of SEATC is to open our ancestors box of wisdom, knowledge, respect, patience and understanding."**

The Box of Knowledge serves as the logo for SEATC as well as a guiding metaphor. In Tlingit, *Yaakoosgé Daakakóogu* means "The box of knowledge that will be opened when people come to this college." I anticipate ten tribes will be founding members of the SEATC and representatives of those tribes will elect the board of trustees. ✨

# Yup'ik Region: Calista Elders Council Expands Services

*Mark John, Executive Director, Calista Elders Council, Inc.*

Just recently, I moved my office to Bethel to be able to work more closely with the Elders and youth in our region. I have enjoyed visiting with people who have dropped by my office to see who we are, what we are doing and what we plan to do. There has been some confusion between Calista Corporation and Calista Elders Council (CEC), so I would like to provide some background about CEC.

The Calista Elders Council was incorporated on March 27, 1991. It was formed pursuant to a shareholders mandate during the 1990 Calista annual meeting held in Kasigluk. The CEC was established to promote the needs of and serve the special interests and concerns of the Calista shareholders ages 65 and older.

The Calista Elders Council is a 501c(3) non-profit organization regulated under state and federal laws. This makes Calista Elders Council an independent entity with its own articles of incorporation and by-laws and its own board of directors. The objectives embodied in the mission statement include:

- Enhance Elder benefits within the Calista region by striving to maintain and preserve the cultural, linguistic and traditional lifestyles of the Natives of the region,
- Improve the health and welfare of the Elders,
- Facilitate infrastructure important in providing for Elder care,
- Encourage and enhance the participation of Elders in the political process,
- Foster and encourage the education of young people within Calista region.

Our major funding comes from grants. Currently, we are operating under a number of grants from different sources including the following:

- A five-year grant from the National Science Foundation for \$1,087,975 to gather, preserve and share Yup'ik "way of being."
- A two-year grant from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Drug Elimination Program for \$695,760 under sub-recipient agreement with Calista Corporation.
- A one-year Historic Preservation Fund grant in the amount of \$50,000 from the National Park Service, under sub-recipient agreement with Calista Corporation.
- A one-year Administration for Native Americans grant in the amount of \$124,909 for *Yup'ik Foundation Word Dictionary*.
- An annual grant of \$50,000 from Calista Corporation for administration and overhead, plus use of office space and office equipment and supplies in Anchorage.
- An equipment grant from Rasmuson Foundation in the amount of \$25,000.

Additional funding in various amounts has been received from the

following organizations:

- ◆ Administration for Native Americans
- ◆ Alaska State Council on the Arts
- ◆ Alaska Humanities Forum
- ◆ Coastal Villages Region Fund
- ◆ Exxon
- ◆ Various businesses and village organizations

The primary focus of our efforts has been the documentation and strengthening of Yup'ik culture. When I went out to do a very brief survey of activities that are related to our mission in the winter of 1997 and 1998, culture and history was one area where there was a clear void. We began to make efforts to fill that void and make culture and history CEC's niche in the region.

Calista Elders Council has been successful in obtaining grants to hold three annual Elders and youth conventions, sponsor culture camps over

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*The primary focus of our efforts has been the documentation and strengthening of Yup'ik culture.*

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two summers with a subsistence focus in the Coastal, Kuskokwim and the Yukon areas of the Calista/AVCP region and hold topic-specific gatherings of Elders to collect knowledge on information related to our Yup'ik culture for the past two years. All of the valuable information gathered from our Elders during these events are documented, transcribed and translated. In the very near future, we are looking forward to having publications available in the form of books and a newsletter.

Throughout the past year, Calista Elders Council staff has made a number of presentations to different conferences and conventions related to the preservation of culture and history. Some of these were the CEC

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Elders and Youth Convention, Bilingual/Multicultural Education and Equity Conference, Anchorage, Northern Studies Conference at Hokkaido University in Japan and the National Science Foundation Arctic Social Science Planning Workshop in Seattle, Washington.

We feel a sense urgency to focus our work on culture and history, because many of our Elders that are 65 and older are passing on. They are the ones with first hand knowledge of our traditional lifestyle. They were born before Western influence from the schools and the churches made a big dent in our traditional way of living. They experienced the ceremonies and spiritual activities, dances, subsistence practices, our value systems, stories, semi-nomadic lifestyle, relationships, arts and crafts and everything else that was associated with our culture. We will continue to work with them to gather knowledge that is so valuable.

Subsistence was the main focus of our camps. This summer Calista Elders Council ran four ten-day culture camps in the region. The first one was at Umkumute on Nelson Island from June 3 to June 13 for the coastal villages; the second was from June 17 to June 27 near Akiak for Lower Kuskokwim villages; the third was near Kalskag from July 1 to July 10 and the fourth was held July 15 to July 25 between Pilot Station and Marshall for Yukon villages. We requested participation by a boy and a girl from each of the 48 occupied villages in the region. We had an Elder as an instructor for every five students in each camp, along with staff to document cultural information and provide camp support.

The camps incorporated two age groups: Village Elders who served as the camps' teachers and mentors and sixth- and seventh-grade youth who were attending the camps to learn

Yup'ik/Cup'ik cultural skills, history and values. Subsistence hunting, fishing and harvesting activities appropriate to each camp location were the focus of the camps, providing the Elders an opportunity to pass down traditional skills and values.

This summer Chris Dock from Kipnuk ran the summer camps. He did an excellent job and worked very well with the Elders, youth and staff

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*We feel a sense urgency to focus our work on culture and history, because many of our Elders that are 65 and older are passing on. They are the ones with first hand knowledge of our traditional lifestyle.*

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as well as communities that were involved. Chris stated that he enjoyed the experience and he was very grateful for the help that the Elders and the camp staff provided. Congratulations to Chris and all who were involved for a successful camp season and a big *quyana* from all of us.

This fall, we are going to continue to document traditional knowledge. We plan to have a topic-specific gathering in November with selected Elders, the culture coordinators and the drug elimination project staff from the villages.

The CEC board decided to schedule the annual meeting and convention in Akiachak in March of 2002 rather than in November when it has previously been held. The reasons cited were bad weather and poor travel conditions normally experienced in the fall. The past conventions were held at Kasigluk in 1998, St. Mary's in 1999 and in Toksook Bay in 2000.

Calista Elders Council board and staff are very proud of the progress we have been able to make in a short time and we plan to continue to make

efforts to expand our work in the area of culture and history. In the future we plan to provide more services to the Elderly and the youth and collaborate with other organizations with similar activities whenever possible.

Calista Elders Council has made Bethel the base of our operations. We are expanding our staff in Bethel. We will continue to have an office in Anchorage and employees that will work out of their homes in the Anchorage area. We will also hire culture coordinators that will be located in the villages to work with clusters of communities within the region. We are aware that CEC has an excellent potential for growth and we will strive to continue that growth to provide cultural activities as well as services that are needed for our Elderly and youth.

I would like to say *quyana* to our board, who have contributed valuable knowledge and wisdom. They are Paul Kiunya, Sr., chairman; Bob Aloysius, vice-chair; John A. Phillip, Sr., secretary; Peter F. Elachik, treasurer and Nick Andrew, Sr., Winifred Beans, Irvin C. Brink, Sr., Peter Jacobs, Sr., Paul John, Fred K. Phillip, Andrew J. Guy and Myron P. Naneng, Sr. as board members.

I also would like to extend a very big thank you to both our Anchorage and Bethel based staff. They are Nicholas "Bob" Charles, Jr., program manager; Alice Rearden, transcriber/translator; Dr. Ann Fienup-Riordan, consultant; Monica Sheldon, oral historian; Chris Dock, camp coordinator and Elena Chief, gaming. Without their support, we would not be where we are. *Quyana caqneq!*

We wish all of you good health and success in your subsistence activities. We can be contacted at P.O. Box 2345, Bethel, Alaska 99559 or at 301 Calista Court, Suite A, Anchorage, Alaska 99518. Our contact numbers are 907-543-1541 in Bethel or 1-800-277-5516 in Anchorage. ✨





# *One Among Others*

*by Gail Pass*

**S**ee yourself as one among others,  
See children, fathers and mothers.  
Acceptance of who you are in a crowd  
in amongst us, not above on a cloud.  
The difference of one in a crowd can make,  
little bits of change, opportunities to take.  
Learn from me as I learn from you,  
allow lessons in life to change you.

Individualize all, humble your heart,  
You generalize a nation, hatred you start.  
This hatred you breathe, fear and detest,  
born from the compounds of vanity at best.  
Tolerate us, a nation of all flavors,  
respect family, friends and neighbors.  
See yourself as one among others,  
See children, fathers and mothers.

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