



Sharing Our Pathways

VOL. 7, ISSUE 1
Jan/Feb 2002

A newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
Alaska Federation of Natives ♦ University of Alaska ♦ National Science Foundation ♦ Rural School and Community Trust

Nurturing Native Languages

by Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley

Many Americans are intolerant of diversity, be it cultural with its concomitant languages, or biodiversity in an ecological system. Instead, we see notions of human and cultural superiority with designs for a monolingual and monocultural society in which the English language and its associated culture presumes to become the language and culture of the world. Thus indigenous cultures have to contend with a language and its ways that has a very “voracious appetite,” as phrased by Richard Little Bear. We, indeed, have a formidable enemy which absorbs our Native languages and cultures very readily, unless we are cognizant of its hunger and take protective steps. This mass culture can be most appealing to young people. Its behaviorisms, codes of dress, languages and sometimes destructive proclivities inveigle young people to its world.

Griffin’s observations ring true to me because my Yupiaq language is nature-mediated, and thus it is wholesome and healing. It contains the creatures, plants and elements of nature that have named and defined themselves to my ancestors and are naming and defining themselves to me. My ancestors made my language from nature. When I speak Yupiaq, I am thrust into the thought world of my ancestors.

(continued on next page)

We know ourselves to be made from this earth.

We know this earth is made from our bodies.

For we see ourselves. And we are nature.

We are nature seeing nature.

We are nature with a concept of nature.

Nature weeping. Nature speaking of nature to nature.

—Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature*

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Sharing Our Pathways

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

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Let me cite two examples of the elements of nature naming and defining themselves. The first is *anuqa*—the wind. It is telling its name and telling me what it is. It is the moving air which is needed for life. The other is *lagiq*—the Canadian goose. It's call is "lak, lak, lak" giving its name to us and by its behavior telling us its habitat and its niche in the ecological system. "We are nature with a concept of nature." Truly!

We, as Native people, have seen our languages become impoverished in the last several centuries. Many of us now speak our Native languages at the fourth and fifth grade levels (if such a grading system existed for us). We look at the wounds in our minds and we see that the wounds also exist in nature itself. "We know ourselves to be made from this earth" and it makes us weep when we see the destruction and pollution around us. We realize that the relationship between ourselves and our places is a "unity of process" (Joan Halifax). We know that there cannot be a separation between the two.

As we lose our Native languages, more and more of us begin to take part in the misuse and abuse of nature. We use English predominately in our everyday lives today. We don't realize that English is a language contrived by the clever rational mind of the human being. The letters were derived by the human mind. The words are a product of a mindset that is given to individualism and materialism in a techno-mechanistic world. For us to think that we can reconstruct a new world by using English and its ways will not work. We need to return to a language that is given to health and healing. To try to make a paradigmatic shift by using the consciousness that constructed this modern world is bound for failure. Albert Einstein stated something to the effect that "you cannot make change in a system using the same conscious-

ness used to construct it." This should be very clear to us as a Native people.

In my Yupiaq ancestral world egalitarianism was practiced. In this form of governance no creature, plant or element becomes more important than another. All are equal. In the great state of Alaska, I can incontrovertibly state that racism is alive and seems to be gaining strength. This is a circumstance which is unconscionable and reflects a very destructive and alienated stance in the larger society.

How is it that we "stabilize indigenous languages"? I think that we must once again speak the Native languages in the home a majority of the time. If we expect only the school to do it, it will surely fail. The school must become a reflection of a Native speaking family, home and community. During the waking hours of the day, the children must hear the Native language being spoken—in the home and in school. The one-to-one and family conversation in the local language must be the standard of the day. The community, family, parents and especially the children must begin to know place. How is this to be done? By the Elders, parents and community members speaking to one another in their own language and from the Yupiaq perspective.

To know self, one must learn of place. How does one learn of place? You begin by telling *quliraat*, the mythology, stories of distant time, which are powerful teaching tools still applicable to the present. You learn of the times when our ancestors were truly shape-shifters. It was easy to change from one form to another, and one was in control of self. Values and traditions are taught by these stories which are so ancient that we call them myths. From these you can tease out problem-solving tools and discern characteristics that make for a healthy and stable person living in a healthy and sustainable place. Told by an Elder whose inflections, facial and body language add to the words,

these myths teach not only discipline for the members but more importantly self-discipline. We must re-inculcate self-discipline in our people as a matter of survival.

The *qalumcit* must be told, as they are the stories of us as a Native peoples. They tell us how we got to be at this place, our movements, problems encountered and resolved, years of plenty and scarcity and how to read the signs foretelling events, how we made sense of time and space, how trade and exchange of goods and services was accomplished and how genetic diversity in the community was maintained.

The rituals and ceremonies must be relearned and practiced. The loss of these have developed schisms in our lives. We have become fractured people. These rituals represent revival, regeneration and revitalization of our Native people.

The *yuyaryarat*—the art and skills of singing, dancing and drumming—brings one to a spiritual level. Our word, *yuyaq*, means to emerge into a higher plain, a higher consciousness through concentration on the movements when singing and drumming.

We must also seek to relearn the Native names of places. It is incomplete knowledge for us to know the distance between two places in miles. It is also important to be able to “guess-timate” the time it will take to go from point A to point B and to know the history and place names between the two points. Then it becomes whole and useful knowledge.

I just recently returned from Hilo, Hawaii where I was a participant in a planning meeting for revitalizing the Hawaiian language and culture. One interesting side trip was a visit to a Native Hawaiian charter school a few minutes from Hilo. I learned that the local Native people had begun landscaping unkempt property and refurbishing dilapidated buildings. This was initiated even before grant funds were made available for the project.

This is true determination and motivation to reconstruct education which is meaningful and effective for the Native people. When my hosts and I arrived, we were met by the students at the entrance to their school. They sang in their own language and several students made welcoming remarks again in their own language. When

The rituals and ceremonies must be relearned and practiced. The loss of these have developed schisms in our lives.

protocol called for my response, I responded in my Yupiaq language. To see and hear the protocol that had been practiced for millennia by their people made my heart feel good. This happening after hundreds of years of barrage to change their language and culture gave me hope that we, too, can save our Alaska Native languages.

It was refreshing and energizing of spirit to look at the landscape and see the work that had been done. The best part was a plot of land where only the original flora of Hawaii had been planted—a very ambitious endeavor which required research and feedback from the few Elders still with them to determine which plants are native to the land. One building had photovoltaic panels on its roof to power some of their computers and filter pumps for their fish hatchery tanks. At another location, young men were preparing food in the traditional manner of heating rocks with the ingredients placed in baskets on top and covered over with banana leaves and canvas. The food was eaten prior to the graduation exercises.

If you find yourself in a situation where there is a minimal number of myths, stories, rituals and ceremonies available, then I would suggest that you find sources that are well written and your Elders deem to be true. Translate these into your own language

with the help of Elders and knowledgeable community members that may be familiar with the technical language contained in that treatise. When satisfied with the final translation, read it to the group for approval. Then it would behoove us to read it to the youngsters who will become the historians of the community—the future keepers and practitioners of sacred knowledge.

To bring the above back into practice is to know who you are and where you are. This would contribute broadly to the important notion that it is alright to be Native, to speak the Native language and to use Native tools and implements in play and work. After all, our technology was made by our ancestors to edify our Native worldviews. Please, what ever you do, do NOT give to the youngsters the idea that modern technology has an answer for everything. It does not. Use it merely as a tool and use it minimally and judiciously. Remind the students that technological tools are intensive in the use of natural resources and energy. To accept technology blindly is to negate the painful works to revitalize our Native languages and cultures. I wish you all the wisdom of the *Ellam Yua*, the Great Mystery in your continuing efforts. “We are nature.” *Quyana* ✨

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Nikaitchuat Ixisabviat: An Iñupiaq Immersion School

by Igxubiq Dianne Schaeffer

Nikaitchuat translated into Iñupiaq means “any thing is possible” and *ixisabviat* means “the place to learn.” Nikaitchuat Ixisabviat is an Iñupiaq Immersion school. The teachers conduct all classes in Iñupiaq. Nikaitchuat was started by interested parents and community members who felt that a cultural approach to education was needed if our children were to thrive.

Tarruq Pete Schaeffer served on the regional school board for about four years and found out that it would be very difficult to have the school he and his wife envisioned installed in the current school system. Abnik Polly Schaeffer worked for eight years at the elementary school as an Iñupiaq teacher; she taught seven classes a day with 25 minutes for each class. The students had fun, but they never retained anything because of the short amount of time given to each class. Tarruq and Abnik had a vision of a school—of students being taught in Iñupiaq and learning the cycles of the Iñupiaq year.

In the spring of 1998, Tarruq and Abnik Schaeffer sat down with interested community members and said that they were opening up a school in the fall. We didn’t have a building, curriculum or staff. We formed committees and each committee had a chairperson. I was on the enrollment committee and we came up with the enrollment process for Nikaitchuat. There was also the finance committee and a couple others. Sandra Erlich Kowalski was

hired for the summer to find out what we needed in order to open up as a school.

On September 10, 1998, Nikaitchuat opened with 20 students, three teachers and one director. We had very little furniture and



Nikaitchuat Ixisabviat 2001–2002 visit the NANA Museum of the Arctic.



Ivik Kunuyaq Henry along with Igluquq and Agnik Schaeffer pour uqsruq (seal oil) into containers for their parents.

the school supplies hadn’t arrived yet. Tarruq Schaeffer gave \$100 to Abnik and Aana Taiyaaq to buy school supplies like pencils and paper. We had the determination and will to teach our children what we feel is impor-

tant: the Iñupiaq language.

Nikaitchuat Ixisabviat is formed under the umbrella of the tribal government, the Native Village of Kotzebue also known as Kotzebue IRA. We have an agreement with NANA to give us some money and lease the building to us for one dollar a month. We get a grant from Maniilaq and from the Department of Education (we are in the second year of a three-year curriculum development grant) and we also get the Johnson O’Malley money from Kotzebue IRA and parents pay a monthly tuition for their child to attend our school.

Parent involvement and education are a vital part of school functioning. Parents help out by volunteering during and after school hours in tasks as varied as reading to children, serving snacks, cleaning, curriculum development and support, providing transportation to the Senior Center, learning and teaching cultural activities and

the list goes on. It is not uncommon to see grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings enter the school to volunteer as well. We ask parents to put in at least four hours of volunteer time a month. There are a few parents that put in eight hours or more a week. We have a bimonthly parent meeting where the parents catch up on what their child is learning. We have a potluck once a month where all parents and relatives are invited to attend.

Nikaitchuat Ixisabviat is in its fourth school year. We have five older students (two are in second grade, two in first grade, four kindergartners and ten pre-kindergartners for a total of 19 students. We have four teachers, one director and one curriculum development specialist.

This year, the first graders have been working on their writing skills along with learning more math. Instead of taking a nap, they do school work, like writing and reading in Iñupiaq. Abnik Polly Schaeffer has been busy teaching them the different subjects. Aana Taiyaaq Ida Bieseimer has been helping Abnik with the first graders, along with teaching the younger students the basics.

Isan Diana Sours and Suuyuk Lena Hanna are kept busy with the younger students (the three and four year olds), teaching them the basics of how to get along and to respect other students. The two biggest things that are reinforced daily is *Kamaksrixutin* and *Naalabnixutin*—to be respectful and to listen! They also learn the colors in Iñupiaq, numbers and their Iñupiaq names. Each student is called by their Iñupiaq name; some teachers don't know the children's English name. The students are learning how to write their name.

We have staff to develop the curriculum for the first graders. Kavlaq Andrea Gregg is the curriculum



Qikiqtaq Walker, Aana Taiyaaq Bieseimer, Qignak Atoruk and Urralik Gregg pick asriaviich (blueberries) this last fall on one of our many field trips.

development specialist. She has been working on developing a curriculum based on the seasons of the year, building upon what Nikaitchuat has done the past three years. We are still looking for an assistant for Kavlaq, who will help in coming up with new and exciting curriculum for our older students.

We make lessons planned by the week and this week's topic is *niksikusq* (fishing); this week's color is *tufuaqtaaq* (purple); the Iñupiaq value

being reinforced this week is respect for nature and the shape of the week is *aqvaluqtaaq* (circle).

My name is Igxubuq Dianne Schaeffer and my title is Director. This is my second year as director—before that, I was on the Parent Governance Committee and a parent of one of the students. I've been working along with the Parent Governance Committee on how Nikaitchuat can expand next year. We would like to continue to grow with the oldest students, hopefully into the fifth grade.

We are looking for a new building as we are at full capacity in the building we are in now. There is a possibility of obtaining a building with our tribal government, the Kotzebue IRA. We continue to grow and hope to share what we have learned with other communities. If you are here during the school year, we invite you to our school; we are located behind the Pizza House in Kotzebue. Come on over and check us out! ✨

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ANKN Curriculum Corner

by Ray Barnhardt

Starting with this issue, a new feature will appear regularly in the *Sharing Our Pathways* newsletter—the “ANKN Curriculum Corner”—highlighting curriculum resources available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network that are compatible with the tenets outlined in the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*. We welcome submissions of curriculum resources and ideas that might be of interest to others, as well as descriptions of curriculum initiatives that are underway or for which you are seeking sites or teachers who are willing to pilot-test materials. Information on obtaining copies of the materials described in this column is available through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network at www.ankn.uaf.edu, or at (907) 474-5086.

Translating Standards to Practice—Science Performance Standards and Assessments

A comprehensive resource document prepared by science teachers from throughout the state under the guidance of Peggy Cowan and Cyndy Curran, for use by the Alaska Department of Education, the Alaska Science Consortium and all science teachers (now available on the ANKN web site at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/translating>).

Handbook for Developing Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum

A concise teachers guide developed by Sidney Stephens in conjunction with the Alaska Science Consortium to provide assistance to teachers in the development of locally-relevant science units (<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/handbook>).

Village Science and Village Math

Two teacher handbooks prepared by Alan Dick offering an extensive compendium of ideas for ways in

which to connect the teaching of basic science and math concepts as reflected in the state standards using examples immediately at hand in a village setting. The teacher and student guides for *Village Science* are available on the ANKN web site at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/vscover.html>. The *Village Math* resources are currently in draft form and can be viewed at www.ankn.uaf.edu/villagemath for pilot testing by interested teachers. Questions or suggestions for either of these resources should be directed to Alan at fnad@uaf.edu.

ANSES Chapters/Camps/Fairs Handbook

A series of resource documents to assist teachers and school districts in sponsoring K–12 chapters of the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Society, which in turn sponsor science camps and Native science fairs. These resources are available on the ANKN web site at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/anses>.

Subsistence Curriculum CD-ROM

This CD-ROM is filled with a col-

lection of curriculum resources for all grade levels and cultural regions around the theme of “subsistence”. It is available from ANKN for experimental use by teachers as well as to solicit additional resource materials that can be included. Contact Sean Topkok for further information on this item (fnkst@uaf.edu)

Soos Koyukon Curriculum Model

A curriculum model and guide prepared by Virginia Ned based on the design of a traditional *soos*, a form of food cache used by Koyukon Athabaskan people. Please contact Virginia at fnmdm1@uaf.edu for further information on this useful curriculum framework.

Snow Science

A curriculum handbook prepared by the Denali Foundation outlining ways to integrate traditional knowledge and Western science around the theme of “snow”. This resource is nearing completion and will be made available through ANKN.

Alaska Native Games: A Resource Guide

This is an extensive collection and description of the traditional games that are featured in the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics, the Native Youth Olympics and the Arctic Winter Games. Prepared by Roberta Tognetti-Stuff, this document will give you everything you need to know to integrate traditional games into your teaching. It can be downloaded from ANKN at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/nativegames>.

Alaska Clipart Collection

A collection of Alaska-oriented clipart assembled by Alan Dick that can be used by students and teachers to liven up the documents they produce. The collection is available in an easy-to-download format at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/clipart.html>. ✨

Translating Standards to Practice Now Available on the Web

by Cyndy Curran, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

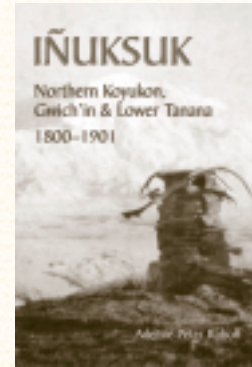
A user-friendly resource for all science teachers in Alaska is now available in another format. The electronic version of *Translating Standards to Practice: A Teacher's Guide to Use and Assessment of the Alaska Science Standards* is accessible on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web page at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/translating>.

Developed collaboratively by the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, the Department of Education & Early Development with funding from the National Science Foundation, *Translating Standards to Practice* is a tool for improving science instruction for all Alaska students. Alaska educators, along with members of the business, Native and scientific communities wrote *Translating Standards to Practice* to enhance, complement and integrate the *Alaska Science Content Standards* and the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*.

The purposes of *Translating Standards to Practice* are (1) to help teachers as they further develop their science instruction and (2) to serve as a guide for districts as they make choices about which standards, as well as which aspects of the standards to focus upon for different benchmark levels. Written to reflect the diversity and richness of Alaska, *Translating Standards to Practice* can guide teachers as they create performance assessments for their classrooms. A bridge between the wisdom of the cultural traditions of the Elders and Western science, *Translating Standards to Prac-*

tice will help teachers enliven their science teaching and help increase student achievement for all Alaska students.

As with the hard-copy format, the science content standards are divided into the following benchmark levels: Level 1, ages 5–8; Level 2, ages 8–10; Level 3, ages 11–14 and Level 4, ages 15–18. The web page format allows teachers to click on a science standard within a benchmark level and view the content standard, the performance standard for the benchmark level, sample assessments for that performance standard and, in many cases, an expanded sample assessment idea with an accompanying scoring guide. So that teachers have access to the documents on which the performance standards are based, the references from the *National Science Education Standards* and *Benchmarks for Science Literacy* are also included. Within each benchmark level teachers will find sample units to help them to see how and where performance assessment fits within a unit. Teachers can use these sample units as guides when they develop their own units of instruction. ✨



Inuksuk: Northern Koyukon, Gwich'in and Lower Tanana, 1800-1901

by Adeline Peter Raboff,
published by Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 2001

Subject headings:
Ethnohistory, Anthropology, History, Native Americans

Inuksuk is an ethnohistory of the Northern Koyukon, Gwich'in and Lower Tanana Indians of Interior Alaska between 1800 and 1901. This book is rich with new ethnonyms, place names and personal names of the area and the cultures involved. It is a detailed and fascinating account of pre-contact and post-contact Interior group dynamics that could only be gathered with the aide of the oral tradition of the numerous Iñupiat accounts, Gwich'in, Koyukon and Lower Tanana informants and the author's intimate knowledge of her culture. This ethnohistory is set in a time frame where every written source from missionaries, explorers and military personnel were coordinated with the events which are recounted in the oral tradition. In most cases the oral account deepened and expanded upon the written record. A must read for students of Alaska Native history and anthropology. ✨

Project Centered Education

by John Carlson, Director, Noyes Slough Action Committee;
Teacher, Anne Wien Elementary School

David Orr, who writes of our society's relationship to our natural world, summarizes that "Schooling has to do with the ability to master basic functions that can be measured by tests. Learning has to do with matters of judgment, and with living responsibly and artfully, which cannot be measured so easily." This brings us to the process of designing curricular opportunities that provide for a deeper learning than is directed by the current national and state trend towards written exit exams. I wonder at the semantics of the word exit; exiting from what, to where and with what knowledge?

We should not accept without question the notion of standards. To whose standard of life and values do we teach? Can one array of standards and related test items meet the needs of both the rural citizen and urbanite? One must ponder these questions. Although the traditional academic areas assessed on these exams have invaluable usefulness, particularly in the economic world, they in no way represent all that is necessary to living a fulfilling life. The traditional evaluation of educational aptitude produces, as Orr sarcastically observes, ". . . the highly schooled and heavily degreed fool, and a person lacking intellectual pedigree."

Learning has to do with matters of wisdom and with living responsibly and purposefully with not only the personal welfare in mind, but the good of the commons as well. Unfortunately to our political leadership, these skills—skills essential for the survival of our human society—are not easily measured. Nonetheless, our politicians continue to hammer on our children for exit exam scores as if higher test scores alone will set the world right. In the meantime, curricular opportunities become more and more nar-

rowed and further alienated from their own community's needs and values.

Some of the best learning opportunities are the most organic ones. Experiential learning is one way to provide additional educational opportunities for children. From the start, differences between experiential learning and the typical approach to classroom/school learning become apparent. A significant difference, and one that might cause discomfort to those locked into the traditional American classroom structure of learning, is the inevitable release of strict control of lesson planning, progression and outcome while following the philosophy of experiential learning. You can plan for a learning situation, but you cannot, if believing in experiential learning, plan for exactly what will be learned. This immediately points out a philosophical paradigm shift from conventional educational thought in that the school and teacher not make the assumption to be the possessors of an all and powerful bank of knowledge. Not only do they not assume to have all the secrets to the world, but they do not necessarily possess the ability to determine in totality what children should be learn-

ing. The typical approach to classroom teaching and learning often makes assumptions that detailed criteria and methods can be designed, adopted and often standardized to be used in varying educational settings with a wide range of students, often representing varying socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Ivan Illich, author and observer of social and educational systems, hoped for an educational change towards communal activities in libraries, work places, families and other community settings. Even though change is uncomfortable, we should look ahead to growth and not let the growing pains prevent us from trying new ideas. "The fear that new institutions will be imperfect, in their turn, does not justify our servile acceptance of present," says Illich.

Experiential learning pertains particularly well to educational situations in a cross-cultural context. Oscar Kawagley, a professor at the University School of Education, reviews the role of traditional learning in a Yupiaq Eskimo context and it illustrates clearly the long history of learning in an experiential way. As he states, "Alaska Native worldviews are orientated toward synthesis of information gathered from interaction with the natural and spiritual worlds . . ." Notice that the word "interaction" is used here rather than words such as "schooling" or "taught." Kawagley (1997) says that the mystical knowledge of Yup'ik cannot be developed solely by observation, but will materialize as a result of "participation of the mind, body, and soul." A Yup'ik worldview is developed in part by interacting and participating in your cultural and natural world.



The natural world holds unlimited discoveries.

It would be difficult to mention all the directly related educational activities at Anne Wien Elementary School that have taken place in relation to Noyes Slough and the children's local watershed. The bulk of these activities are really project centered endeavors, and have been generated from those in direct contact with the projects, the classroom teachers and children. There is no canned curriculum generated by an educational consultant Outside. There are, however, both delightfully spontaneous and carefully planned educational activities. The Noyes Slough generates the activities as much as the children and teachers generate them. Many of these activities would not have been possible without parent and community volunteers and additional funding to temporarily reduce classroom size during these specific projects. Some of the accomplishments include:

1. Trail Construction: students designed, constructed and maintain a three-quarter-mile Noyes Slough Nature Trail in Lions Park next to Anne Wien Elementary School.
2. A third grade class is currently working on an interpretive trail guide for the Noyes Slough Nature Trail.
3. Trail Kiosk: a sixth-grade class has designed and is currently building a trailhead display for the Noyes Slough Nature Trail.
4. Riparian protection and restora-

tion: a sixth grade classroom is conducting a restoration effort involving damaged areas of seasonal wetlands. Other classrooms have wired trees along Noyes Slough to protect them from beaver.

5. A Noyes Slough website was created by a sixth-grade class. This website won a gold medal in the environmental category of the International Cyberfair contest.
6. Children have worked alongside various agency professionals to conduct water, invertebrate, and sediment testing to determine whether Noyes Slough meets federal and state water quality standards.
7. Three Noyes Slough symposiums have taken place involving over a hundred different presenters working with children in both classroom and field settings. The focus of the symposiums have been to increase understanding of our watershed.
8. All children of our school contributed to a permanent hallway mural depicting the journey of Noyes Slough and its flora and fauna. Its title: "Noyes Slough is Our Backyard".
9. Teachers are incorporating watershed study and Noyes Slough into school district curriculum in writing, reading, math, science, social studies, art, physical fitness and all other areas of school life.
10. A group of community volunteers have built an observation deck in Lions Park overlooking the Noyes Slough. They have dedicated it as the "Outdoor Classroom"!

Traditional schooling makes the assumption that by instructing students in various disciplines that society, or rather those in power positions, have determined "important" and by learning enormous banks of knowledge students will retain much of this information in meaningful ways when the time comes to apply them. Experiential learning suggests instructing to more relevant learning, thus assuring deeper knowledge and understanding, thereby reducing the risky proposition of inconsistent and inaccurate transfer of learning. Should project-based experiential learning replace traditionally organized schooling in which children are seated in desks



Students compare the importance of vegetative buffers along Noyes Slough.

working quietly with teacher-directed lessons? Absolutely not. Some of our school curriculum is effectively taught in this way and the children can enjoy lessons organized in this way. Nonetheless, learning through direct activity in community and ecological projects can add much to the existing curriculum. ✨

References

- Orr, David W. (1992). *Ecological Literacy, Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Illich, Ivan. (1970). *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

AISES Corner

by Claudette Bradley

Congratulations to the University of Alaska Fairbanks AISES College Chapter for receiving the Outstanding Chapter of the Year award at the AISES National Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 15–18, 2001. The chapter has instituted the following outstanding programs:

The AISES students have developed the NEWNET outreach program for high school students to educate them about AISES, plus science, mathematics, engineering and technology careers. The students have a tutoring program, which took several years to develop. As a result they have a weekly



Sommer Stickman from Nulato, grade six with her project "Pitch: Will It Kill Bacteria?"

schedule of tutors available for all the mathematics courses and some science courses. The AISES students invite quality guest speakers in the science, mathematics, engineering and technology fields to meet with them in their biweekly meetings and work sessions. The University of Alaska Fairbanks chapter enjoys strong student leadership and good faculty support.

Among the sessions at the national AISES meeting was a three-person panel on "Alaska Native Elders Impact on Education in Interior Alaska". Caroline Tritt-Frank of Arctic Village

is a tenured teacher in Yukon Flats School District and is a master's degree candidate at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Caroline spoke of her research on indigenous language immersion programs in New Zealand, Hawaii, Canada and Bethel, Alaska. This research is helping her develop a Gwich'in language immersion program in Arctic Village.

In the same session Catherine Attla spoke of her work with teachers and students in Koyukon-Athabascan villages and the four books she has authored on Koyukon-Athabascan stories and beadwork. Catherine is an Elder from Huslia, Alaska and has many opportunities to work with educators and students helping them learn Koyukon-Athabascan traditions.

Claudette Bradley spoke about culture-based science camps and science fairs held every year since 1996 in Alaska. Claudette is an Associate Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Society (ANSES) coordinator for Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI). The camps employ Elders from Interior villages and Native certified teachers. The Elders supply valuable Native knowledge about crafts, stories, animals and plants for students' science projects. The teachers assist the students in the

development of their science projects at the camp and these are then entered in regional science fairs. The ANSES science fairs have two sets of judges: the scientists judge the research design and science knowledge in the projects and the Elders judge the project's value to Native culture and village life.

Throughout the state ANSES holds regional culture-based, science fairs. These include the following:

- Kodiak , November 2001
- Fairbanks Fair, December 6–7, 2001
- Juneau Fair, January 2001
- Kotzebue Fair, January 24, 2002

Pribolofs, Unalakleet and Bethel are currently planning to have science fairs just before the statewide fair in February, 2002.

Two to four projects are selected as grand prize winners at each regional fair. The students who developed the grand prize winning projects have an opportunity to attend the ANSES statewide science fair in Anchorage February 3–5, 2002. The students and



Tamara Thomas and Kiera Abrams, grade nine, with their project "Can Spruce Trees be a Medical Application?"

chaperones will stay at the Camp Carlquist Lodge about 30 miles outside of Anchorage. The judging of the projects will take place at the Carlquist Lodge and the awards will be presented at the Sheraton Hotel during the Tuesday luncheon of the Native Educators Conference. ✨

Southeast Region

by *Andy Hope*

The Southeast Alaska Native Educators Association (SEANEA) will hold a reorganization meeting/staff development workshop January 12–13, 2002 in Juneau. The SEANEA was organized in 1996 but has been inactive the past couple of years. The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative recently received a Teacher Leadership Development grant from the National Science Foundation. This grant will provide funds to support the hiring of a lead teacher and other education/staff development activities in each region. I have included a rough draft of a framework for SEANEA activities from the present through September 2002. I look forward to hearing from each of you soon.

Proposed SEANEA Framework for 12/1/01 to 9/30/02 Scheduled Meetings:

December 15, 2001

Teacher Leadership Development Project funding MOA, AFN/Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes for TLDP funding for the Southeast Region.

January 12-13, 2002

SEANEA Organizational Meeting/Professional Development Seminar, to be held in Juneau, Alaska.

January 12: Organizational Tasks:

1. Elect officers.
2. Appoint an interim coordinator to serve until a lead teacher is selected (target date for selection, 7-1-02).
3. Plan for a professional development institute (Summer, 2002).
4. Select delegates to attend the Native Educators Conference scheduled for February 3–5, 2002, Anchorage.
5. Discuss the I Am Salmon Children's Festival, tentatively scheduled for spring 2002 in Leavenworth, Washington.

6. Set possible quarterly meeting teleconference schedule.

Immediately following the organizational meeting, staff from the Imaginarium Science Center will make a presentation on the following project:

The Imaginarium is thrilled to announce that our Health and Science Outreach Initiative has received two prestigious grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). Both grants will expand the Imaginarium's ability to bring meaningful, hands-on science and health experiences to villages and communities throughout Alaska.

It is important to the Imaginarium, and indeed the very core of the project's vision, to ensure that these outreach programs are guided by and based on the needs and interests of the communities that they will serve. To this end, we plan to coordinate a town hall type meeting in each of the five geocultural regions of Alaska. We are working

with the regional coordinators of the Alaska Native Knowledge Network to identify appropriate locations in each region.

January 13: Professional Development Seminar.

1. Introduction to the I Am Salmon curriculum project
2. Introduction to the Tribal GIS Consortium.

Ongoing Activities/Discussions:

1. Relationship to existing educational institutions/organizations:
 - Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
 - Alaska Dept. of Education and Early Development Native Education Advisory Council
 - Consortium for Alaska Native Higher Education
 - Southeast Alaska Tribal College
 - University of Alaska Southeast: Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Alaska's Schools
 - Other Native educator associations
2. Developing community based partnerships, e.g. the Tribal GIS Consortium
3. Alaska Department of Education and Early Development contributions to TLDP ✨

We are asking prospective SEANEA members to send us the following information, which will greatly improve our database:

Name
Address
Telephone work
Telephone home
Email work
Email home
School
Position
Past positions held

Other: grandparent, Elder, aunt, uncle, community worker, or mentor
Please send this information to:
Andy Hope, fnah@uaf.edu ✨

Athabascan Region

Tribute to the Minto Elders

by Kathryn Swartz

This is the first part of a special two-part tribute to recognize some of the Minto Elders for their valuable contributions to the annual Cross-cultural Orientation Camp in Old Minto and for sharing their culture with all of us. The material presented here is a compilation of descriptions from stories written by Minto students for the Denakkanaaga Elder-Youth Conference 2001, the Minto Cultural Atlas and from other sources.



Chief Peter John

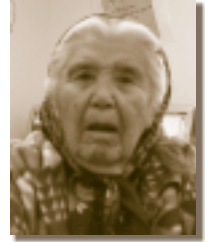
Chief Peter John was born in Rampart and he is probably over 100 years old. He lost his parents when he was young and was sent to St. Mark's Mission School in Nenana where he learned reading and writing. He lived a subsistence lifestyle and married Elsie Silas when he was 25. Peter and Elsie had ten children and adopted another four. Today they have three daughters of their children living. Peter was a disciplined student of his own culture and he has also studied the Bible. He held the post of Village Chief on and off since 1945 and he was a central figure in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. In the early 1990s, he was named Traditional Doyon (Chief) for the Interior Athabascans, a post he will retain for life (from *The Gospel According to Peter John*, 1996).

Dorothy Titus was born October 22, 1911 at Four Cabins in the Minto Flats. She is the eldest of the children of Moses Charlie and Bessie David. Dorothy received very little education; she says just a little schooling at a time. In 1929, Dorothy married Matthew Titus of Nenana and they had nine children and adopted five. Dor-

othy says that Matthew worked on the boat all the time; she stayed at home with the kids and dogs. When Dorothy was young she used to do everything. She would tan all kinds of skins: moose, beaver, otter and muskrat. Her husband taught her to trap and hunt. "I once caught a rabbit and lynx in the same snare, the rabbit was around the lynx's neck." She also likes to help people; she is a kind-hearted lady who gives without hesitation. Today, Dorothy enjoys crocheting, making baskets for sale, camping and going to church.

Evelyn Alexander was born on December 25, 1916 to Little Charlie and Agnes Charlie, at Old Minto and she attended school up to grade two. During the winter they had to move out to hunt and trap. Evelyn says that there were no jobs in those days so she trapped and helped her dad provide for the family. She would help him build fishwheels and sleds. At a young age, she was recognized for her talent as a singer and she was asked to sing for others. Evelyn married Jim Alexander of Nenana in 1935. Together they had two children and they adopted six. Evelyn said, "I was

really active. I was a dog musher, health aide, mid-wife and Sunday school teacher . . ." Evelyn's hobbies include making birch-bark baskets, going out camping and hunting, doing bead work, making vests, slippers, gloves and she also enjoys crocheting and knitting. Evelyn has received many awards, among them Doyon's 1998 Elder of the Year and AFN's 1999 Elder of the Year.



Evelyn Alexander

Elsie Titus was born on June 1, 1919 to William Jimmie and Susie Silas in Old Minto. Her education went up to the third grade. She married Robert A. Titus and they had eleven children. She has previously worked as a kitchen helper at the Minto Lakeview Lodge. Her interests and hobbies are beadwork, sewing quilts, birch bark basket making, crocheting and she likes to knit mittens and socks. She also enjoys skin sewing and making things such as boots, slippers and beaver skin items. She also cuts out material for shirts, bedding and wall tents. Elsie's mother taught her about arts and crafts. There is a canoe at the university that she helped sew. Elsie climbed all the way up COD Hill this fall during the annual field trip, with some help from Bill Pfisterer!

Lige Charlie was born on September 1, 1921. He started school in Old Minto, but then was sent to St. Mark's Mission in Nenana. He started to work as a deckhand on the riverboats before he was drafted into the Army in 1943. He served for three years during WWII in Attu and Shemya on the Aleutian Islands and in Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula. After he got out of the Army, he married Susie on March 16, 1947. Lige likes to work on all sorts of things, but he is known for his trapping, working on sleds, stoves, building cabins and houses. He works hard, especially in Old Minto every year when he usually builds a fish



Dorothy Titus



Left to right: Lige Charlie, Elsie Titus, Susie Charlie and Josephine Riley.

wheel. Lige and Susie put in a well at their fish camp downriver from Old Minto that both the Recovery Camp and the Cultural Heritage camp use. Pumping water has become a camp ritual and all appreciate being able to use the well.

Susie Charlie was born March 16, 1928 at Old Minto. Susie was raised by Laura Charlie, Chief Charlie's wife, after her mother died when she was five. She went to school up to the fourth grade where she remembers just beginning to learn about fractions. She remembers never going to school for a full week, she always had to help the older ladies with chores such as cutting wood and cleaning. She and Lige had ten children and they raised four of their grandchildren. Susie worked as a school cook in 1969 until the village was moved in 1970. At that time Susie and Lige moved their family to Fairbanks for three years while Lige worked for the Highway Department. Susie also worked as a fee agent for ten years, helping people with paperwork. Then she worked as a cook and kitchen helper for the Senior Program and for Tanana Chiefs in Old Minto. When asked what kind of special interests she has, Susie replied, "Lots of things!" She enjoys singing, dancing, hunting, fishing, camping and berry picking.

Josephine Riley was born October 28, 1929 to Titus John and Charlotte Albert. She went to the school in Old Minto up to the fourth grade. She believes good teachers were there and that is why all the Minto Elders can speak English well. Josephine was married to Harry L. Riley, Sr. and they raised 17 children. Josephine picked up odd jobs now and then as a substitute

teacher and working during elections. She is also a homemaker. She has given speeches for the Minto School and UAF classes several times. Throughout Josephine's life, her favorite interests and hobbies are dancing, driving dogs, berry picking, knitting and ice fishing. Josephine believes we should always share the first of what is caught like beaver, black ducks, moose or king salmon with a neighbor or whoever is in the camp. Also, we should always be good to one another.

Note: Watch for the next issue with more on the Minto Elders. ✨

Yup'ik Region KuC Language Center Revitalized

by John Angaiak

Ten years ago, the Yup'ik/Cup'ik Language Center was virtually wiped out due to the reorganization of the Kuskokwim Campus of the University of Alaska. Most of its faculty were lost and it was left with only two members. Now, under new leadership during the last year, and support from local education agencies including the AVCP Tribal College, it has been given a new lease on life.

The husband and wife faculty team, Sophie and Oscar Alexie, led the November 16 meeting at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center in Bethel, Alaska. With smiles, they faced some fifteen eager supporters from various local educational agencies and some listening in from as far away as the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Language Center and Scammon Bay, Alaska.

The group discussed goals first before developing mission and vision statements in order to get a clear idea

of KuC's intentions. Revitalization is focusing on preservation of the Yup'ik/Cup'ik languages as the centerpiece of group discussion with KuC taking the lead. Preservation could lead to a degree program, archive key dialects, work with Elders by having regional Elder conferences, identify language barriers and promote Native arts and crafts as an economic development option. To make these issues a reality, supporting agencies will remain united behind KuC and meet at least once a month. ✨

Iñupiaq Region

by Branson Tungiyian

Kawerak, Inc. has been busy with various activities that involves the Eskimo Heritage Program. I have been busy with the expectations of the Eskimo Heritage Program, the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI), the Arctic Studies Center's Alaskan Collections Project and the Bering Strait Regional Elders & Youth Conference that is set for February 26–28, 2002 in Nome, Alaska.

First, the Eskimo Heritage Project, for which I am the program director: We are in the process of putting 403 individual Elder interview (transcribed and translated) documents, 339 Elders conference documents and 249 Elder Advisory Committee tapes into a computerized database, so we can create our own website. This has been a long painstaking process because the Bering Strait region works with three language groups in the region: Iñupiaq, St. Lawrence Island Yupik and Central Yup'ik. Also in our archival collection, we have approximately 125 video tapes of Elders' conferences, 1500 old photographs and approximately 7000 slides.

AKRSI hired me to be the regional coordinator for the entire Iñupiaq region—from Unalakleet to St. Lawrence Island and up to Barrow. I have the privilege to work with Nome Public Schools, Bering Strait School District, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, North Slope Borough School District, Ilisagvik College at Barrow and Northwest Campus here in Nome. This is a very large area where, besides the three languages in our region, the Iñupiaq language has sub-dialects within the Iñupiaq language group.

I have also been involved with the Arctic Studies Center's Alaska Collections Project in which the Arctic Studies Center is doing a three-year project

to bring Elders from each region to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC to name and identify objects. I followed the first group in May from Unalakleet and the second group in September. We were there during the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Our hotel was only a mile away from the Pentagon at Rosslyn, Virginia. It was quite an experience that we will never forget and very scary.

We have also worked with Igor Krupnik, an anthropologist from the Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Department. He had co-authored the *Sourcebook on St. Lawrence Island* from the Smithsonian's archival collections. It is now in the process of being printed. Photos in the book, "Our Words Put On Paper" were taken in the late 1800s of Gambell people, all in a traditional background setting.

We are also in the process of preparing and planning for the Bering Strait Region 2002 Elders & Youth Conference. The theme, "Uniting Two Worlds Through Education For A Healthy Tomorrow" was selected by the Kawerak Elders Advisory Committee. This fits very well with all of the AKRSI staff meetings and the recent First Native Education Summit's expectations regarding Native education in Alaska. We are expecting approximately 1,000-plus Elders and youth to gather in Nome from the Bering Strait region, along with speakers, presenters and panelists from other regions and cities like Anchorage, Fairbanks, Bethel and Juneau. Three tracks will be focused on education, community wellness/healthy choices and visions/dreams/prophecies. It is our hope that these tracks will help with the problems of alcohol and substance abuse in our region. Elders & youth conferences have been held in the region since 1979.

As we begin a new year, we reflect back to the unforgettable time Marie Saclamana, Estelle Oozevaseuk, Jacob Ahwinona, Aron Crowell, Suzi Jones and myself spent at Washington, DC during the attacks; the MOA Partners meeting in August; all the AKRSI meetings we attended; the Leonid meteor showers and of both Gambell and Savoonga landing a whale in each community in December. And we, at Kawerak, wish you A HAPPY NEW YEAR! ✨

AKRSI Welcomes Gerald Sam

Gerald Sam was recently selected as the Native and Rural Education Support Specialist (formerly the AKRSI Regional Coordinator) for Interior Athabaskan Tribal College.

Gerald "Jerry" grew up in the Allakaket area, was a past AFN representative, has strong Tribal ties from his time as a village chief and council member, and has always been an advocate for tribal members on educational and other community issues. ✨

Alutiiq/UnangaĶ Region

by Moses Dirks

Song of the Atkan Aleuts¹

Mayumúlx madángis maangan waaga tíng aġusix, ayúxsix
angalíqingáan,

haladálíx iqyaġhlikuqingaan, algaĶ qáwaĶ iníxsínaĶ qasadaasalíx
aygaxtaĶtákuĶ ukuĶtálíx,

angádan tíng hanikásix an'gilakalinàqing:

Mayaġúlax aĶtagálim manáaġnatxin maasahliikalka anuxtalka,
manáaġnaning mahliidáqing anuxtáasalíx íqyang ukangan
hangadagáan uġáluĶ idġisix, qígaslílix achidálíx,

ngáan tíng iqyaġisxa, ilagáan aġálka uġalúĶtagalikung, uġáluĶ
ílan changatlakánka ákung,

txín hatangnil amángus aġákuĶ,

agalagáan iqyaġlílix, uġaludaaġdagalikung, anáġis máasalakanka,
inimáan uġaluningíin kadalísalka,

ukúuġing alagáaxta táaman tíng aġúsix ayúglaasaĶ akúqingáan,

Kíin ukúungan halazaaġdagalílix áaġalix,

ásix qidáaġing agúu-kúma, qidahlíidaĶ líidaĶ tutálíx,

háangus hanikaqadáaming, tanaanuungan tíng iqyaġísix tanáanulix
chalakuqingáan,

Hamakux agatíkix qaġaĶtálkix, qugáasanang anuxtadáking,
cháayax íkin tutúsik agitálíx áaġalix, tununákix turalákan,
hingáya malgáhlilix anuxtáangan aĶtakúning málix, háangus
aĶtakútxíchix waya.

Álix chaayachix súlix aġíítxíchix a wáy.

—author unknown

This is a song about a hunter who goes out hunting for sea mammals. He sees a sea lion surface in front of him, he feels confident that he can harvest this sea lion so he waits until it dives. He hurriedly goes in front of it and sees it surfacing. He pulls out his spear and spears the sea lion. But it does not penetrate the skin of the sea lion. Instead the sea lion gets startled and dives under. He continues to pursue the sea lion but he just gets his spear point dull. He gets discouraged and dispirited and feels like crying. He sits in his *iqyax*² for a while and he continues on homeward. What saves him is the wonderful sound of the drums on the beach. He then goes up to the group and joins in the singing and dancing.

The elusive sea lion!—this particular song I can relate to. Since then high-powered rifles replaced the harpoons and the skin boats have been replaced by aluminum skiffs with outboards. I have gone hunting for sea lions since I was eleven years old. I got my first sea lion when I was eleven. That feeling has always stayed with me.

The reason why I wanted to write this piece is because a lot of the Unangan people have the opportunity to harvest sea lion for subsistence purposes but they don't. It is our birthright and a source of nourishment for the Unangan people. Going hunting is like a ritual for me because I am at peace with the natural surrounding and a power surge of spiritual feeling fills the air. It is hard to describe exactly what it is, but I am sure that a lot of the hunters experience that and know what I am talking about. I encourage more Unangan people to go out and experience that power surge. ✨

1. From Unangam Ungiikangin Kayux Tunusangin • Unangam Uniikangis Ama Tunuzangis • Aleut Tales and Narratives, Collected 1909–1910 by Waldemar Jochelson, edited by Knut Bergsland and Moses L. Dirks.

2. The *iqyax* is a skinboat (English), *quyaq* (Iñupiaq) or *baidarka* (Russian).

2002 Native Educators' Conference

February 3-5, 2002

held in conjunction with the annual

Alaska Bilingual/ Multicultural Education/ Equity Conference

February 6-8, 2002
Anchorage, Alaska

The purpose of the Native Educators' Conference is to provide an opportunity for people engaged in education impacting Native people to come together and learn from each other's work and to explore ways to strengthen the links between education and the cultural well-being of indigenous people. Building on past themes, the theme for the 2002 NEC is "Nurturing Continuous Growth." For further information, contact:

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PO Box 756730
Fairbanks, AK 99775-6730
Phone: 907-474-2477 or 474-1902
Fax: 907-474-5615
E-mail: fnvml@uaf.edu.

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

Dr. Bernice Tetpon
Alaska Department of Education
and Early Development
801 W. 10th Street, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-1894
Phone: 907-465-8729
Fax: 907-465-3396. ✨

Village Math: Romance

by Alan Dick

When people ask me what I do for a living, I tell them that I write romance stories. With their curiosity piqued, I go on to explain that I attempt to create a love affair between students and science, between students and math.

While it is hardly "Sleepless in Seattle", *Village Math* (first draft) is my latest attempt. When students give us shoddy excuses for not completing an assignment, we often assign detention. If students had the same authority over teachers, most of us would spend a good portion of our lives in detention for the lousy excuses we offer in response to the honest question, "Why do I need to learn this math?"

Village Math is not a math text. It doesn't pretend to cover all math standards or concepts. However, it does identify dozens of real life math applications faced by folks living in the

bush. Young people will identify with the situations and with a little coaxing by teachers, they will see the importance.

Village Math might not be a full-blown romance yet, but it openly flirts with students and teachers everywhere. Certainly some will respond.

A first draft version of *Village Math* is on the ANKN website at www.ankn.uaf.edu/villagemath. Send me ideas of locally-relevant math ideas from your area and I will try to use them in the next draft. We must win student's hearts as well as stimulate their minds. ✨

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