

Standing Their Ground: The Integration of Community and School in Quinhagak, Alaska

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This article describes the efforts of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnauroviat, the K-12 school in Quinhagak, Alaska to implement school reform initiatives that support the merging of school and community values and priorities in significant and multiple ways. Through the collaborative efforts of Yup'ik teachers, administrators, community members, and university faculty, changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices in Quinhagak were documented during a two-year case study research project. Through the research process it became evident that nearly all the significant changes in Kuinerrarmiut Elitnauroviat in recent years have been designed to integrate meaningfully what is valued in the life of the community with the teaching and learning that occurs in school. The study confirms that despite nearly a century of political, economic, social, and educational efforts to change the language, customs, and subsistence lifestyle of the Yup'ik people, most Quinhagak citizens have chosen to "stand their ground" as they make a serious effort to integrate their beliefs into the fabric of the formal educational system.

One of the most common threads woven throughout the history of education for Aboriginal people in Alaska and Canada is the often repeated recommendation that Aboriginal people need to be able to exercise local control and self-government over their schools. In Canada this was most effectively articulated in the 1973 policy paper calling for "Indian Control of Indian Education." In the United States this recommendation was first put forward in the 1928 Meriam Report, and it has been repeated in nearly every major Native American education report and set of recommendations since then. (*Aboriginal people* in Alaska refers to *Eskimo, Aleut, and Indian people*, identified collectively as Alaska Natives.)

There is a growing recognition among people who work with K-12 and university-level educational institutions that many of our most valuable lessons for developing culturally appropriate and sustainable Aboriginal education programs and policies have come from opportunities to work with, and learn from, colleagues in other regions of the world with comparable populations of Aboriginal people. This is especially evident in the Canadian and Alaskan regions, where there are often strong parallels between the historical and current social, political, and economic contexts of schooling options for Aboriginal people—even more so than those between Alaska and the "lower 48 states."

However, there are still few Aboriginal communities in Alaska where substantive (rather than superficial) mechanisms for local control are in place—and even fewer that have been sustained over a long period of time. Many of the institutions that have the legal obligation to provide schooling for Aboriginal students (K-12 and postsecondary) readily provide vocal support for increased local control, but few commit to mechanisms that actually implement this deeper level of change. Other institutions, especially schools or universities with few Aboriginal faculty or staff, simply choose to ignore recommendations that call for this type of reform.

It is important that K-12 teachers, community members, and university faculty work closely together to begin to document more formally the work of the small numbers of Aboriginal communities, schools, and districts that are truly making changes that reshape their own curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment policies and practices in ways that provide close alignment between their communities' priorities and those of their school. There is mounting evidence that this is necessary, not only for schools that serve Aboriginal populations, but for all children. In a report on the work of *The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*, Darling-Hammond (1998) states:

We know that students learn best when new ideas are connected to what they already know and have experienced, when they are actively engaged in applying and testing their knowledge to real-world problems, when their learning is organized around clear goals with lots of practice in reaching them, and when they can use their own interests and strengths as springboards for learning ... We also know that expert teachers use knowledge about children and their learning to fashion lessons that connect ideas to students' experiences.

Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat: The School of the People of Quinhagak, Alaska
In this article I report on the efforts of one Yup'ik Eskimo community (Quinhagak, Alaska), one school (Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat), and one school district (Lower Kuskokwim School District) to put into practice procedures and organizational structures that actualize local control. The information reported in this article comes from a larger two-year research project in Alaska in which seven teams worked independently and then collectively to learn more about issues of school reform in Alaska Native communities. The project was jointly sponsored by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon and by the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). Each team had either a UAF faculty member or a Northwest Laboratory researcher who had the responsibility of preparing a case study in collaboration with the other team members. I served as the UAF School of Education faculty representative for the Quinhagak team and had the privilege of working with four Yup'ik educators who have a great deal of expertise in, and experience with, issues related to Yup'ik Eskimo education.

The collaborative research model we used served multiple purposes: (a) it provided a group of Alaska Native teachers and administrators with some of the research tools and experience necessary to continue to conduct their own research, thus lessening their dependence on outsiders to provide them with information about their own schools; (b) it provided research information that is based on issues and contexts of importance to Alaska Native people; (c) it provided teacher preparation institutions with material and evidence that can be used for developing more culturally responsive teacher preparation and professional development programs; (d) it provided K-12 and university personnel an opportunity to work collaboratively on issues that are of critical importance to both; (e) it provided preparation for the essential partnerships that will have to be developed to address the close-to-critical shortage of teachers for Alaska's rural schools; and (f) it provided assurance that the information gathered, and way it was written, would be acceptable for dissemination to an external audience.

While we were preparing our case study (1997-1998), a rally on behalf of Native rights was held in Anchorage in May 1998 in which 4,000 people participated—the “biggest political demonstration the city has ever seen” (Kizzia, Manning, & Porco, 1998, p. 1). Under the theme “Alaska Tribes—Standing Our Ground,” people protested a variety of recent assaults on rural communities and Native government, and their concerns ranged from subsistence and tribal rights to state budget cuts affecting rural communities. The portion of the Quinhagak case study reported in this article provides an example of how one community, with the support of its district, is demonstrating that it has been able to “stand its ground” despite a long history of obstacles that are too often used as an excuse to acquiesce and default to a generic form of schooling.

Quinhagak, Alaska

Quinhagak, a Yup'ik Eskimo community of 550 people, sits on the southwest coast of Alaska close to where the Kanektok River flows into the Bering Sea, 500 miles away from any road system. It is a region of Alaska where Yup'ik people have lived for thousands of years, and the name of the village, Quinhagak, is derived from *kuingnerraq*, which denotes the ever-changing course of the Kanektok as it continually forms new channels, winding its way through the surrounding tundra. Today the lifestyle of the people of Quinhagak continues to embody the name of their community, as is evident in the evolving practices that provide evidence of their ability to integrate the traditions and beliefs of their Yup'ik ancestors with the contemporary practices necessary for success in a rapidly changing modern world. Subsistence activities that range from hunting seal and caribou to fishing and gathering wild berries and wild greens are practiced; the Yup'ik language continues to be used in home, social, political, and educational contexts; a few residents continue to go to the river for

their drinking water; and some people use dogsled teams. However, Quinhagak people today can also purchase all varieties of foods from their local store, enroll in university coursework delivered to them through computer and videoconferencing, watch television on nine different channels, travel in and out of their remote village on five regularly scheduled daily flights, and nearly all residents can communicate in both Yup'ik and English.

Although this might appear to be a community of contradictions, it is in fact a community where many residents are in the process of finding a satisfying and workable balance between old and new, traditional and contemporary, Western and non-Western ways of knowing and living. It is a community that has continued to place a high value and priority on the Yup'ik language despite decades of English-only influences. It is a community that is exercising its tribal rights by assuming responsibilities previously delegated to federal authorities. It is a community where people have maintained their membership and participation in the Moravian church while continuing to practice and follow many Yup'ik traditions (Strunk, 1997). It is a community in which the daily lives of its residents make it evident that they have been successful in finding ways to integrate beliefs and practices that many people believe are incompatible.

Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat is the Yup'ik name of the school in Quinhagak: a name chosen by the community. Roughly translated it means "the School of the People of Quinhagak." The name reflects the community's belief in the importance of local ownership and genuine involvement in the schooling process of its own children. In the past few years Quinhagak people have made a concerted effort to initiate a range of programs in their 140-student, K-12 multigrade school that will provide their children with the tools and resources necessary to integrate Yup'ik language and values meaningfully into school practices and policies in the belief that this will provide them with the ability to be successful in meeting Yup'ik "life standards" as well as preparing them to meet the academic standards of the state of Alaska. The focus of the Quinhagak case study is on the efforts to integrate community and school practices and policies.

Influences of the Past

For nearly 100 years the *modus operandi* of federal and state educational systems in Alaska was to ignore the history, culture, and language of Alaska Native people and build what has sometimes been referred to as an "iron curtain" between school and community. It is clear that even today the historical factors that helped to shape the social, political, and educational context of Quinhagak continue to exert a direct influence. Although there has been a public elementary school in Quinhagak since 1903, many people were not able to complete more than a few years of schooling because of family responsibilities or because there was no local schooling

opportunity beyond grade 6 (Barnhardt, 1985). The first teachers in the Quinhagak School were associated with either the Moravian church or the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Strunk, 1997). Like most villages in this region, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) managed Quinhagak's school until the extensive and far-reaching decentralization of Alaska's rural schools by the state legislature in 1976. Following the decentralization, in 1980 Quinhagak became formally associated with the Lower Kuskokwim School District, which has its central office in the rural regional hub community of Bethel. It is the largest of the 24 rural school districts in Alaska and it provides services for 27 schools.

Research Process

Members of the Quinhagak case study team included two lifelong members of the community: John Mark, principal of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat School, and Dora Strunk, an elementary teacher at Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat School. Two other educators from the same region of Alaska were also on the team and both held positions in the Lower Kuskokwim School District: Nita Rearden, a Yup'ik language coordinator in the Bilingual and Curriculum Department, and Susan Murphy, Assistant to the Superintendent. I served as a representative of the University of Alaska Fairbanks and had the responsibility of preparing the case study.

Our Quinhagak case study team examined and reviewed community, school, and district materials gathered during my three visits to Quinhagak, two visits to Bethel, and five full-team meetings in Anchorage. I also met formally and informally with students, teachers, teacher aides, and community members during my Quinhagak visits, observed in all the classrooms, and attended events that occurred during my visits (e.g., a community-wide graduation ceremony for students in kindergarten, grade 8, and grade 12—conducted almost entirely in Yup'ik). Some of the team members communicated regularly via e-mail. Three members were able to participate in state and national conference presentations. All but one of the Alaska Native certified teachers at Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat received their bachelor's degrees from UAF (and I had served as academic advisor for four of these seven teachers). Two of the team members were enrolled in UAF graduate courses during the case study preparation.

The guiding question of our case study team was to identify and better understand school reform efforts that contributed to the merging of community and school practices, and we had a special interest in the role that the Alaska Onward to Excellence (commonly referred to as AOTE) planning process had played in this effort. AOTE is an approach to school improvement that was implemented in several rural communities in Alaska in the mid 1990s through the collaborative efforts of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Childhood, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, individual districts, and individual schools and communities. The fundamental principles of AOTE are community in-

volvement in the educational process and increased academic learning for students. This is accomplished through training and work completed by community, school and district teams including leadership teams, research teams, and in some sites, case study teams.

AOTE in Quinhagak

The AOTE process was initiated in Quinhagak in 1995, and because one of its primary goals is connecting school and community (Kushman, 1999), the people of Quinhagak were interested and receptive. In addition, their school district also provided support for this grassroots approach.

[The AOTE] process involves the entire community at the village level in determining the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed, and in determining and developing action plans to meet those goals and implement those plans. Through this process, the communities and schools are building partnerships so that the educational system can prepare our children to survive and prosper in two worlds. (Lower Kuskokwim School District, 1998)

Although there were existing opportunities for local involvement in the educational process, most had been designed and directed at the district or state level. The AOTE structure does recognize and respect district and state administrative units, but it does not mandate their participation in the decision-making process. Therefore, when Quinhagak completed its first year of community meetings, led by Yup'ik teachers and other members of the community AOTE teams, the goals developed were clearly those identified and desired by a wider cross-section of the community than is typically represented on advisory boards or strategic planning committees.

The community used the AOTE process to prepare surveys and organize community wide gatherings. As a result they were able to determine that Quinhagak adults had a strong desire to have their children and grandchildren communicate more effectively in Yup'ik-as a way to instill pride and as a means of allowing adults to help children more successfully to grow academically.

The Quinhagak AOTE Plan outlined in Figure 1 was developed and agreed on in 1996 by the people of Quinhagak following several meetings that included Elders, parents, students, and school personnel. The goals identified as priorities were adopted by the school the following year.

What We Learned

Based on our case study team's initial review and then formal documentation of reform efforts in Quinhagak, it quickly became evident that most of the significant changes in the school in recent years were attempts to recognize and meaningfully integrate what is important and valued in the life of the community with the teaching and learning that occurs in school. The educational goals of the community, as identified by past practices and by the community-constructed AOTE plan and student learning goal

Quinhagak AOTE Plan

Values and Beliefs

1. Every person deserves respect.
2. Every person must take responsibility for his or her choices and actions.
3. Every person deserves meaningful work and responsibility.
4. Every student has the right to a quality education, taking into account his or her qualities, abilities, and choices.
5. Learning by observation is a lifelong process.
6. The parent is the child's first important educator.
7. Parental involvement and consistent discipline are essential to maximize student potential.
8. Children learn best when they are taught concepts using prior knowledge.
9. Love, patience, and a positive attitude are important in all aspects of learning and being a good person.
10. School-community-individual interaction and cooperation is essential to a quality education.

Mission Statement

Quinhagak is a strong Yup'ik village where individuals, parents, and community are vital.

The mission of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat is to educate people based on the positive traditional and cultural knowledge of the village. The school will develop students who are self-motivated, who can help improve their chosen communities, and who are self sufficient.

One Student Learning Goal for Improvement

1. Communicate more effectively in Yup'ik.

Figure 1.

(i.e., "students will learn to communicate more effectively in Yup'ik"), advocate the use of what children already know, value, and are interested in. This knowledge base would serve as a solid foundation for academic growth and learning in all 10 Alaska academic content standards areas including reading and writing, math, science, world languages, history, geography, government and citizenship, technology, arts, and skills for a healthy life. In Quinhagak the AOTE process reinforced and provided additional support and structure for long-established beliefs and practices about the importance of merging school and community. The statements below provide evidence, documented in the case study, that the school and the community are merging in significant and multiple ways.

Shared School-Community Values in the Sights and Sounds of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat

When one enters the front door of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat, the sights and sounds make it immediately evident that this is not a school like one in downtown Anchorage or in rural Arkansas. A large banner high on the

wall tells people *Ikayuqluta Elitnaulta* (Let's Learn Together), a bulletin board has materials written in Yup'ik and English, photos of village Elders are in the hallways, and posters of Yup'ik families in the LKSD district promote continued schooling and the maintenance of traditional Yup'ik values and beliefs. A display of photos of teachers and other staff members in the school lets visitors know that the large majority of people who work in this school, including nearly half of the certified teaching staff, are Yup'ik people from the community. The school library has large paintings on the walls with scenes of the Quinhagak area, and an Alaska and Yup'ik Collection that includes nearly every book that has been published in the Yup'ik language.

The organization of the school is reflected in the distribution of the 140 K-12 students in the two wings (elementary and secondary) of the school facility. The students in grades K-8 attend classes in one wing and all classes, except kindergarten, are multigraded. High school students are divided in two groups for most classes, and for most of the day they meet in one large classroom that includes a well-equipped computer lab. All classroom areas are severely overcrowded, with some rooms stacked nearly to the ceiling with supplies. Most classes have a full-time Yup'ik-speaking teacher aide from the community, and most aides have completed at least some college-level coursework

The principal John Mark is a lifelong member of the Quinhagak community. Like others employed in the school, "Mr. Mark's" responsibilities are more varied and more comprehensive than those of school staff in urban areas. During the day he hosts a steady flow of students, staff, and community members in the school offices, and the usual language of interaction is Yup'ik. The school office prepares a *Daily Bulletin* that serves as an information source for students and staff, and because it is faxed to the tribal offices, the clinic, and the store, it also serves to keep community members notified about school events. In some instances it notifies the school population of community events.

- Saturday is Alaska Day so everyone should wear their *qaspeq* on Friday.
- The AOTE potlatch will be this Sunday at 4:00. This will be a memorial potlatch to celebrate ____ and her outstanding contribution to our community and school. Food may be brought to the school between 3:00 and 4:00 PM.
- Today is election day for the Advisory School Board, City Council and IRA elections. The polls are open at the Community Center. Please get out and vote.
- The Potlatch is scheduled for this coming Sunday from 4-6. We will be passing out AOTE cups to all parents attending. Owen Lewis, from Kwigillingok, will be coming to be our guest speaker. All students are encouraged to attend with their parents and

grandparents. Everyone attending should bring a dish or some food item to share.

- ____ is getting married on Saturday. Let's all wish her a wonderful marriage.
- There will be an AOTE Leadership/Parent Committee/Parent meeting today at 4:00 in room 101 to discuss the draft discipline policy. Door prizes will be given and refreshments will be served. All are encouraged to attend.
- Note of caution: The ice is thin on the river due to the warming weather—students should stay away from the river. Also, there have been some small children playing at the dump. This is a hazardous place due to broken metal and other materials and students should not be playing at the dump.
- ____ is due in this morning, however, it is foggy and the planes may be delayed.

The bulletin reminds the community that daily school attendance is important. Certainly no student in Quinhagak can conceal his or her reason for missing school without a great deal of creativity, because the bulletin publicly reports any absence and the reason for it such as those listed below.

- may be in later/excused;
- taking child to Bethel;
- home or unexcused;
- babysitter problems;
- hunting or excused;
- clinic/sick.

The *Daily Bulletin* also includes a "Yup'ik Thought for the Day," written in the Yup'ik language (a language that comprises the following 18 letters: A C E G I K L M N P Q R S T U V W Y).

- *Quyatekiu aqaintellren unuamek ... quyatekaput!* Be proud of what you accomplish today ... we are!
- *Qenrutevneck tamarikuvet, yuaryaqunaku.* When you lose your temper, don't look for it.
- *Ikayucetuulit angayuqat ayuqaitut.* Involved parents make a real difference.

Shared School-Community Values in Curriculum and Pedagogy

Several of the most significant and pervasive responses to the goals of melding school and community priorities, increasing student learning, and communicating more effectively in Yup'ik are evident in the implementation of new or modified Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat curriculum and pedagogy strategies as summarized below.

Daily interaction in the school is in both Yup'ik and English. The language of instruction in kindergarten through grades 3-4 is Yup'ik, and report cards for students in grades K through 4 are printed in Yup'ik.

Students in upper grades receive oral and written instruction in Yup'ik from the school's Yup'ik Language Leader.

The Lower Kuskokwim School District provides summer institutes that support Yup'ik educators in preparing and producing a wide range of curriculum materials in the Yup'ik language. Many materials are written and illustrated by Yup'ik educators.

One of the primary considerations in selecting the new comprehensive, balanced reading-literacy program by the Lower Kuskokwim School District in the 1998 school year was the desire to adopt a program and approach that would be appropriate for children who are striving for proficiency in both Yup'ik and English literacy.

An extensive effort to integrate Yup'ik ways of knowing and Yup'ik belief systems across the K-12 curriculum and throughout the entire district was initiated through the development and use of Yup'ik thematic units that cover the entire academic school year. This curriculum provides students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills related to Yup'ik values, beliefs, language, and lifestyles in grades K-12.

In addition to enrolling in courses that meet all Alaska high school requirements (e.g., English, math, science, social studies, physical education), high school students in Quinhagak also participate in courses in computer journalism, workplace basics, and wood I or II. In addition, each student is required by the local Quinhagak Advisory School Board to enroll in the Yup'ik Life Skills class (*Kuingnerarmiut Yugtaat Elitnaurarkait*) for two years. This class includes Yup'ik language and culture, Yup'ik orthography, and Yup'ik life skills. It was initiated three years ago to provide a mechanism for allowing students to maintain and build on the Yup'ik foundation that they establish in elementary school through their participation in Yup'ik First Language classes. This course, which integrates content from several subject areas, provides high school teachers with a framework that can be used to involve students meaningfully in the examination and solution of some of the most important and real issues related to the daily life of people in Quinhagak

Shared School-Community Values in the Choices Made for Assessment by the Lower Kuskokwim School District and Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat

The Lower Kuskokwim School District, recognizing the complexity and challenge of valid assessment in schools that serve children from bilingual backgrounds, has been one of the most aggressive in its efforts to develop and use multiple types of assessments (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The district has supported Quinhagak and other sites in their efforts to increase, and integrate into the curriculum, the use of assessments that are authentic and performance-based and that allow for more than one correct response.

As one of the pioneers in the state's effort to implement the Writing Process, the Lower Kuskokwim School District developed a Student Liter-

acy Assessment Portfolio process that is directly related to the state student academic content standards in English and language arts. This process also supports the Yup'ik Language Program. All students in Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat have a literacy portfolio, and most students' portfolios include papers and projects in both Yup'ik and English.

There has been a steady increase in the norm-referenced standardized test scores of students in rural Alaska school districts over the past 10 years, including those in the Lower Kuskokwim School District (Olson, 1997). In the past few years it has been determined that the CAT5 and Degrees of Reading Power scores of grades 11 and 12 students in the Lower Kuskokwim School District who have attended Yup'ik First Language schools are on average higher than students who did not attend a YFL school.

Extracurricular academic assessment activities that Quinagak students participate in include school and district-wide speech contests, and students can choose to compete in either Yup'ik or English.

A more diverse group of people (including school board members, Elders, AOTE team members and parents) is now becoming more directly involved in the assessment process in Quinagak and some other district sites, to help determine if students are reaching the goals set by the community, the school, the district, and the state.

In an effort to better prepare all high school students to pass the new high school competence test and meet the state content standards, and as a tool for providing more continuity from year to year (a significantly challenging task in rural districts where teacher turnover rates are so much higher than those in urban areas), the Lower Kuskokwim School District curriculum coordinating committee has decided to develop and mandate the use of a district-wide uniform course syllabi for all required high school courses in all sites.

Increasing Opportunities for Family and Community Participation in Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat

In addition to changing curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment goals and practices, Quinagak is developing more incentives and opportunities for increased family and community participation in the education of their children.

Many parents in Quinagak are now directly involved in their school because they are serving as the school's teachers, aides, cooks, custodians—and principal.

Several community members serve their school in other positions. Those on the Advisory School Board deal with matters ranging from setting the school calendar to approving changes in the school's bilingual program and AOTE goals, to helping establish budget priorities, to annual approval of the school's principal. The AOTE process also requires volunteer involvement of community members on leadership teams, and AOTE

provides the opportunity for broader participation through its community-wide meetings and potlucks. Other venues for direct participation include the Village Wellness Committee Team and the Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat Discipline Committee.

A discipline committee that included representatives of the community, staff, and school drafted the Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat Discipline Plan in 1997. The proposed plan was reviewed and approved by the Quinagak Advisory School Board after a review by school staff, parents, and students.

Some family members participate in less formal ways through volunteer work in their children's classroom or as chaperons on trips. Others contribute through efforts in their own homes (e.g., providing a quiet place for children to study, reading with and to children, reviewing homework assignments with them). In 1997 the school identified 15 initiatives designed to promote increased parent, family, and community involvement and participation in the school. There were 119 volunteers and 1,500 hours of volunteer service in 1997-1998.

School policies related to the use of the school building also support a community and school partnership. The gymnasium often serves as a central gathering place for several types of community functions (e.g., hosting a community potlatch, holding local and regional basketball events, for proms and other dances, and for celebrating students' graduation). The graduation ceremony for kindergarten, grade 8, and grade 12 in 1998 was held in the prom-decorated gym, and it was conducted entirely in Yup'ik.

Yup'ik people in Quinagak must be directly involved in Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment because it demands the involvement of people who speak the Yup'ik language.

School Reform in Small Rural Alaska Native Communities

Although both rural and urban schools experience ongoing and continuous change at the local and district level (as a result of new administrators, teacher turnover, textbook and curriculum changes, state initiatives, legislative funding, or local bond issues, etc.), the effects of changes are often far more immediate and consequential in Alaska's small rural communities. The deaths in just one year of two of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat's staff members and of two Elders who regularly participated in school events, the threat of losing teachers and aides due to proposed state budget cuts, and even the increased public attention generated by media coverage of the controversial tribal and state dispute over local control and fishing rights in the Kanektok River are events that would be challenging in a community of any size. However, in a small rural community such as Quinagak, where nearly everyone is related in some way to nearly everyone else and where the pool of people able to assume

responsibilities in times of crisis and change is limited, the personal and community effects can be deep.

There is no option in small rural communities like Quinhagak for community members to disassociate, to opt out, to compartmentalize themselves and decide that they will respond to issues only on the basis of their role as a certified teacher in the school *or* their role as a parent of a high school student *or* their role as a voting member of the IRA traditional council *or* their role as the relative of a Quinhagak River Ranger patrolling the Kanektok River. Although outsiders typically think of and refer to *the school* and *the community*, and *the tribal government* as separate entities, in Quinhagak they are in fact all closely intertwined (even though a flow chart might not show them as directly related). The *people* who manage and make decisions about and in each of these units frequently share responsibilities across all of them. With 550 people in 125 households in Quinhagak and nearly 50 adults employed by the school and 140 students enrolled in the school, every family is directly connected to the school and to almost all community associations in some way. Efforts to keep community and school issues separate are artificial, and most Quinhagak people who arrive for work at Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat do not have the option to simply pack their thoughts about subsistence, sport fishermen, or the IRA tribal council in a backpack and leave it on their snowmobile as they enter the school each morning.

Despite nearly a century of political, economic, social, and educational efforts to change the language, customs, and subsistence lifestyle of the Yup'ik people, most Quinhagak citizens have chosen to stand their ground as they make a serious effort to put into practice beliefs related to local control that have only been talked about in the past. This is evident in numerous actions taken by the community in relation to both tribal issues and school decisions.

Summary Comments

This final section provides observations and summary comments regarding: factors that have contributed to the community of Quinhagak *making the choices* it has for its school; factors that have *enabled* Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat to implement new and self-determined educational priorities; and *challenges* that people of Quinhagak face in their efforts to narrow the gap between school and community and to increase student academic achievement.

1. *Factors that have contributed to Quinhagak's decision to use Yup'ik as the language of instruction, develop and require a Yup'ik Life Skills curriculum for high-school students, and provide increased opportunities for parents and other community members to participate in teaching and learning activities:*
 - The people of Quinhagak strongly believe in the importance of their young people learning through and about Yup'ik values and beliefs, as is evident in the mission statement in their AOTE plan.

The people of Quinhagak continue to use the Yup'ik language as their primary language for communication.

- The people of Quinhagak have demonstrated an ability to assume leadership positions at a local level. There is strong confirmation of the community's commitment to self governance and an interest and willingness to assume responsibility and control in their village, as evidenced through their new tribal government initiatives as well as in matters directly related to schooling and to education.
 - The people of Quinhagak have sufficient numbers of Yup'ik-speaking certified teachers to implement their community-set goals in their school.
 - The opportunity to use and integrate their Yup'ik language and culture is supported by their school district. The Lower Kuskokwim School District is the only district in the state that provides its local sites with the option to choose what type of bilingual program the community desires for its children.
2. *Factors that have enabled Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat to implement new, self-determined educational priorities:*
- Quinhagak is one of only a few rural communities in the state that has such a high percentage of local, college-graduated, certificated teachers who speak the language of the community, and a principal who is a member of the community.
 - The AOTE process was initiated at a time when the community was receptive and ready for a grassroots effort that allowed for input and participation from a wider range of people than previous efforts. AOTE in Quinhagak was shaped by a larger and more diverse group of people than some of the previous educational plans, and it was a bottom-up effort rather than a top-down mandate.
 - Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat has been supported in its efforts by the Lower Kuskokwim School District through bilingual program options, bilingual training for teachers and aides, preparation of Yup'ik materials, and Yup'ik-based theme curriculum, summer institutions for Yup'ik curriculum development, hiring processes that give priority to Yup'ik teachers when other qualifications are equal, and strong and consistent career ladder development programs.
 - There are now a number of current statewide systemic reform efforts that complement and support many of Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat's priorities (e.g., the National Science Foundation's Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, the Annenberg Foundation's Alaska Rural Challenge Grant, and the development of new Alaska Native teacher associations). These initiatives are designed

to help integrate Alaska Native ways of knowing and teaching into school systems.

3. *Challenges facing the people of Quinhagak in their efforts to narrow the gap between school and community and to increase student academic achievement:*
- The need to continue to increase student learning for all K-12 students to meet both Yup'ik standards and the standards of the Alaska Quality Schools Initiative. Evidence of new efforts in this area include a district policy that requires 180 student-contact days; the continued use and integration of multiple types of assessments including performance assessments; the recent funding of a federal grant in Quinhagak for after-school and summer academic programs; and journal exchanges between students and parents.
 - The need to find increased means to support the academic and social needs of high-school students, particularly since the passage of legislation requiring a successful score on a statewide test in order to receive a high-school diploma starting in the year 2002. The need to continue to provide guidance and follow-up services for young adults who choose to leave high school before graduating.
 - The immediate and critical need to prepare more Yup'ik-speaking teachers who are qualified and certificated so that the current programs can be maintained and can continue to grow. Historical data provide clear and convincing evidence that without career ladder support and a university that is willing to work on a long-term basis with rural and Alaska Native populations to provide relevant, flexible, and field-based teacher preparation programs, the state of Alaska will never come close to having a percentage of Alaska Native teachers that is representative of the Alaska Native student enrollment.
 - The need to recognize and openly deal with both the benefits and ongoing challenges of living and working in a cross-cultural context. The Quinhagak School is a place that has put into practice what many rural communities have only imagined. Half of the school's teaching staff is Yup'ik, the language of instruction for students for four elementary years is Yup'ik, and the school's environment is one that is truly bilingual, with Yup'ik and English used by the large majority of students and staff. In addition, the school has a relatively stable non-Native staff, with less teacher turnover than in many other sites. The extra energy demanded of teachers, staff, and students who work hard to be knowledgeable about and respectful toward people who are different from themselves must be recognized and supported if we intend to

develop school environments that reflect a “model of diversity” as described by Larry Strunk (1996). Larry is a non-Native man married to one of the case study team members and a father of four, a resident of Quinhagak for the past 14 years, a recent university graduate, newly certificated teacher, and a member of the Quinhagak AOTE leadership team. As part of an assignment for one of his university courses, he described his visions for the future in Quinhagak:

If I were to look five years into the future, I would envision students leaving school with a sense of cultural and personal identity. They would be able to effectively communicate in both Yup'ik and English. The graduates would be comfortable in discussing complicated subjects in either language. They would feel empowered to attain more education or training, which would lead to economic development of the community and more jobs. They would be lifelong learners and good citizens.

The student dropout rate would decline and the number of students who had dropped out, but who were completing GED courses, would increase. Yup'ik dancing would return. The number of kindergarten students entering school speaking Yup'ik as their first language would remain above 90%. Quinhagak would become a model school of cultural diversity and achievement in a thriving community.

Every student would have at least one parent who donates 10 or more hours per year to the parental involvement program *Ikayuqluta Elitnaulta* (Let's Learn Together). We would continue to have supportive administration and school staff who encourage the AOTE process of renewing or refocusing the improvement efforts. The teachers would incorporate the parents into curriculum development and continue to have two-way conversations with them.

I have high hopes, but the reality of changing administration, decreased school funding and shortages of Yup'ik speaking secondary teachers can limit the progress. I hope the AOTE research team can convince some members of the district school board ... that the AOTE process is a long term way of identifying and implementing positive change. They must support the efforts of the communities.

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