

Nutemllarput, Our Very Own: A Yup'ik Epistemology

Theresa Arevgaq John

University of Alaska, Fairbanks

The primary concern of this article is to describe the human psychological development processes and the necessary steps that are associated with the human aspects of learning and behavior from a Yup'ik point of view. The purpose is to define how the Indigenous pedagogy embraces epistemological learning tools in family, community, and academic environment to develop child's awareness and prosperity. The key messages are delivered by providing personal examples that I have learned from my own family and village in Southwestern Alaska.

Maaten ellangua yurarlua. My first childhood memory was as a dancer to my paternal grandmother's sled dog song entitled "Ayagayaqaqua." I could see my grandfathers energetically drumming and singing in front as the villagers bounced to the beat. Even at the age of three, I don't remember being afraid; it just seemed like a natural thing for me to be doing. The dance was about getting driftwood in a winter blizzard that caused the dogsled to sway back and forth on the ice. By this time, I had already learned the complex structures of music text, dance and movement. I remember the dangling beads of the reindeer headdress hitting against my forehead, I was wearing beautiful carved ivory finger mask fans, and I recall the warmth of my fancy fur regalia.

Introduction

All my life I have experienced the classical traditional village lifestyle, listening to *qanruyuutet* (advice) and *qanemcit* and *qulirat* (oral traditions) from distinguished Indigenous Elders, parents, grandparents, shamans, and cultural educators who emphasized and encouraged the importance of leading a genuine Yup'ik way of living. Fortunately, despite negative outside forces such as the English-only policy and Western cultural influences, my family has opted to maintain the Indigenous pedagogy and cultural practices rooted in Yup'ik epistemology that provided us—my siblings and me—a sense of cultural resilience and the fundamental survival tools that have guided us since our earliest awareness. I believe that the Elders' words of wisdom about the traditional knowledge system, including dance, have a role as solid and absolute Indigenous principles in my life that serve as the vital semiotic tools that enable me to know who I am as a Yup'ik woman, professional dancer, community member, Indigenous scholar, and assistant professor. In the following section, I describe my situated identities (Gee, 2007) that have been influenced by Yup'ik epistemic principles.

Yup'ik Woman

As a Yup'ik woman, I was trained by my maternal and paternal grandparents, their siblings, parents, and extended relatives to know who I am as a Yup'ik person, a daughter, a sister, a granddaughter, and a community member with responsibilities and knowledge about the appropriate values and principles to follow regarding social interpersonal communications. As a member of the rural community that depends on a traditional subsistence lifestyle, I have a responsibility to partake in annual hunting and gathering activities as prescribed by the traditional family value system. In order to fulfill the role of a woman in subsistence, I have been taught to get involved in the process and storage of the land and ocean survival substances such as caribou, moose, mink, beaver, seals, fish, birds, berries, and edible vegetables from the land. As a Yup'ik woman with a career, I have to ensure that I make annual calendar plans in advance to be part of family hunting and gathering endeavors.

Professional Dancer

As a professional dancer, I am a member of the community dance group. It is my responsibility to maintain and sustain our community songs, music, and dances even though I do not live in the village. It is critical that I stay connected with the local, regional, and statewide ritual dance leaders and coordinate my travel plans. Being forced to live outside the community due to my career, it is at times difficult to find time to practice and perform with the community. I am responsible for learning the new compositions by interacting with the dance leaders via long-distance technology. It is vital to maintain proactive visibility, advocate for cultural role models, and sustain close cultural bonds.

Community Member

As a community member, I am responsible for maintaining my Indigenous identity and kinship ties and practice the traditional educational, social, and subsistence economy. My educators emphasized the importance of knowing who we are and how we relate to ourselves in the community, especially the disabled, elderly, widowed, and orphaned children who have critical survival needs. Their needs include food, clothing, and shelter. Traditional education emphasizes the essences of harmony, compassion, and knowledge.

Indigenous Scholar

My role as an Indigenous scholar is to practice research with respect for and honor of our ancestors and our people's world view. First and foremost is to work with the people and to ensure that the research is locally based with respect to the Indigenous knowledge system with reverence, honor, discipline, and integrity. I have to look from the inside mind-frame of the people in order to conduct an accurate context and

method. How do the Yup'ik people view their world, and how can I address our genuine traditional knowledge system and parallel it with Western theories and methodologies? The concept of theories and methodologies in the Yup'ik way are delivered through the process of *qanemcit*, *qulirat*, and *qanruyuutet*. The fundamental aspect of the traditional educational knowledge system is based on the welfare of the child whom the whole community shares to educate.

Assistant Professor

As a tenure-track assistant professor in the university, I have a professional responsibility to adhere to the laws of the institution. My authentic background is skewed toward a Yup'ik world view based on interconnected, spiritual, and holistic Indigenous ways of knowing in the Western learning institution. With shallow Western research and context about the traditional Indigenous knowledge system, I often provide my own unwritten knowledge from the teachings I have gained from the Elders and local experts. It is natural for me to incorporate our language, dances, traditional values, and principles as addenda to the curriculum in institutional settings.

The multiple "situated identities" that I describe have been influenced by Yup'ik epistemology, which provides wisdom of understanding our authentic world view. The Yup'ik pedagogy system played a profound role in framing/teaching me how to *act* in these identities.

Below I discuss the relationship between Yup'ik epistemology and the theories of learning and human development that are the basis of a Yup'ik epistemology. In this article I describe first, the Yup'ik human development processes of the mind, awareness, or consciousness; second, senses; third, raising a proper child; fourth, examples of *qanruyuutet* (advice); fifth, the powerful mind; sixth, educating a child's awareness; and finally, the epistemology model.

Yup'ik Human Development Processes of the Mind

A unique aspect of the Yup'ik view of human development processes of the mind begins at the fetal stage. The Yup'ik culture believes in immortality and reincarnation of the soul. This means that our ancestors' spirits never die; they are nurtured and maintained in the living population. It is believed that when people die, their souls move on to the newborn. The purpose of the naming ceremony is to honor the ancestor's spirit both inside the womb and in the newborn.

Yup'ik Indigenous parental methods for raising a proper child with a sound mind essentially apply to the mental, social, and physical welfare of the child in the community. Parents are instructed to treat all children with the utmost level of respect, called *qigcikluku*. The fundamental parental theory is to view the child as a gift from *Ellam Yua* (the Creator). The gift is considered a jewel because there is a notion that parents earn the right to

have their children. Children are regarded as symbols of wealth in hunting and gathering societies. Living in a harsh subsistence environment with constant demand for hard labor, having more children is a top priority. The children, regarded as gifts, are to be nurtured, respected, and raised with proper preparation for prosperity. It is important that respect for the child also pertains to the name-soul of the child. Ceremonial cyclic rituals such as the naming ceremony, first dance, and initiation rituals serve to honor ancestral spirits.

The traditional theory of reincarnation prompts responsible family members to prepare the mind of the fetus before birth. The preparation process involves talking or singing to the fetuses in the morning to greet them or interact with them because we believe that they are able to listen to and hear us. The words contain vital cultural values and principles that are the integral tools and methods to guide a person toward the proper way of life. Family songs with rhythmic sounds energize and enlighten the fetus. Our relatives share personal accounts and narratives about being aware inside the womb as evidence that spirits never die. When a woman is pregnant, she is encouraged to educate her child at the earliest stages of his or her psychological development by visiting Elders to ask for advice. The concept of reincarnation in Yup'ik is not the same theory as, for example, in India, because the latter includes some aspects that are different from the Yup'ik beliefs described above.

Awareness or Consciousness

Elpengqellriit in Yup'ik epistemology are humans and nonhumans that have shared senses. These include the acquired senses of the mind and feelings, as well as sight, sound, and smell. The shared senses are evidence that there is indeed an understanding and a relationship between realms of existence and that all beings have the capacity to interact, associate, and resolve conflicts.

Kangrilnguq Paul John, my father, discusses the senses of the fish bone as follows.

Our ancestors took great care of everything around them as they lived their lives because they fully understood that everything had awareness. They knew that even fish bones were conscious and perceptive. There is a story showing the awareness of fish. As a couple approached a fishnet in the water, they told their [human] guest that they came to that net every year since they cherished its owners, their [human] hosts, for their courtesy and care. They told him that the hosts took care of their bones and always made sure they were not stepped on by people and had good place to stay. They told [their guest] to watch them both and said, "Look at us for a moment for you might think we are humans." The husband was in a kayak paddling with his wife sitting behind him. As soon as his kayak bumped the net two fish got caught and began to splash. (Fienup-Riordan, 2005, p. 44).

Ellaka in a psychological sense means *my* awareness or consciousness. *Ellangua* is when *I* successfully become aware. In contrast, an unsuccessful effort is called *ellangenritua*. The gradual process of *my* becoming aware or conscious is called *ellangenginartua*. For example, a person who has a

mental or social issue and wishes to make positive social changes can testify by stating *ellangcaartua* ("I am trying to become aware") to his family. The action is a self-internalization process and a reflection, a gradual step-by-step progression toward the acquisition of becoming aware and conscious. *Ellangumauq* means that a person has indeed acquired some level of psychological development or awareness of self and the effects of his or her actions and thoughts. Elders, parents, or community members can identify a person who has reached this level by character observation.

Ellavut means our (the people's and the land's) sense of awareness or consciousness. The inclusive term describes the interconnection between the human world and the sacred world where characteristic descriptors are interchangeable.

Like a nuclear family, the humans and nonhumans in a shared world naturally encounter power struggles, situated identity issues, expectations of reciprocity, needs for compromise and compassion, and knowledge between themselves. There is a notion of interdependency among those involved to maintain a balanced ecosystem without unresolved issues and with harmony.

Ellangcaarluten has two meanings in the process of the child's psychological development: (a) to ask one to make an effort to acquire awareness and consciousness, and (b) an instruction for a person to become psychologically aware or conscious in life. The *qanruyuutet*, *qulirat*, and *qanemcit* are psychological conceptual analytical procedures and tools for making someone aware or conscious. For example, a mentally ill person may be asked to go and spend time in the wilderness to think quietly and seek appropriate behavioral changes that will restore a healthy mental state. The wilderness is a place to reestablish relationship to and balance with the wider shared world.

Ellangcaarluten is a command for one to become aware or conscious. This term is used when one needs to be instructed to make characteristic or psychological progress. *Ellangyarturtua* is one's gradual acquisition of awareness or consciousness. In this process, the mind slowly opens to make positive changes. The gradual effort to acquire awareness or consciousness is called *ellangengnaqua*. *Ellangcarturtua* means that one persists in using analytical thought processes to become a better person. My father, Kangrilnguq Paul John (2003), explained the Yup'ik philosophical theory of the mind: "*Yuum umyugaa allamek ayuqaituq, kiingan tauna yugni ayuqenrilutekarput*" ("A human's mind is unique and it cannot be replicated"). He emphasized that our mind is our inner voice representing consciousness and awareness.

Senses

A child's earliest signs of physical and psychological development in the Yup'ik construction of knowledge are called *elpengyaraq*, the process of

developing the ability to acquire human senses. The base term *elpenge* relates to the senses or feelings that are directly associated with the development of mind. *Elpenguq* is when a child acquires human senses. *Elpengengnaqi* is an encouragement to seek gradually acquisition of the senses, feelings, and the mind. *Elpengua* means "I have acquired my senses." *Elpengcarluku* is when a person alerts or warns another person about an event or an action. *Elpekaqa* is the internalization or the realization of one's senses. Elders emphasize knowledge about the essence of human and spiritual senses and process of internalization and self-awareness, especially in events where physical and psychological developments are relevant such as in education about parenthood.

Elders (Andrews, Agimuk, & John) say that when children learn to roll over on their own, this is a critical time to educate them about awareness and consciousness. It is time for the child to learn the Indigenous knowledge system, absorb the profound words of wisdom, develop observational skills, gain hands-on activity experiences, taste food, and learn about discipline management. The child's early learning environment has to be quiet, gentle, proactive, and filled with traditional music and dance. The child's psychological development requires careful planning, along with intense education, organization, and stability.

Below I describe how these principles of learning and development form the basis of Yup'ik epistemology.

Raising a Proper Child

The critical traditional knowledge instruction about a child's proper way of living is called *ellangpertevkenak* (Do not be undisciplined and unaware). A proper child is a well-disciplined individual who listens and follows the laws of human nature that include social, physical, and psychological processes that are passed down through the oral traditional knowledge system. The base term is *ellangperte-*, which means a chaotic, undisciplined, and confused child. The goal of traditional education is to provide a child with proper manners, discipline, and cognition.

In contrast, when parents or educators model a loud, disorganized, and dysfunctional life, children will imitate what they experience into adulthood. In Yup'ik we call this *ellangperrluni*, the one who lives dysfunctionally without order or discipline. The mind remembers precise characteristic methods and applications of its earliest psychological development, and this is why early education is critical. The traditional knowledge system emphasizes a quiet, concise, orderly environment in which a child can become well behaved and intellectual.

The essence of development of children's awareness is that the older the children get, the more difficult it is to change their inner disciplinary system. I remember my grandmother continually reminding us to be kind to our siblings and friends every day. We were taught to reflect each night when we went to bed to think of how we had behaved that day. We were

also instructed that if we had made a mistake that day such as being mean to kids, we should think about not repeating these actions the following day. When we woke up in the morning, we were instructed to think about behaving well all day. This is the practice that I remember as the most useful tool for me as a child who grew up with eight siblings and played with many other children. We learned to contemplate our own inner voices and to analyze our behaviors into adulthood.

Examples of qanruyuutet: Advice

Encouragement was emphasized for all children in our village. We also were given many daily chores that we had to finish before we could go outside to play. My grandmother watched when I had to wash dishes or scrub the wooden floor. She would not let me quit, even though I was lazy, saying that I had to learn to be a good hard worker in life. She emphasized that if I left the chores undone, I would learn to wait and things would pile up on me. We were encouraged to be prompt when we were asked to do chores. The boys hauled ice water, and the girls took care of food brought into the house by the hunters. I had to dump the honeybucket, wash dishes, take care of babies, and help my mother with household chores. I also had to learn to cook at an early age. I remember standing on a chair making sourdough pancakes early in the morning for the spring seal hunters. The children were taught to get up early to begin chores at home. We did not complain because we were taught to help with daily chores. I remember one day specifically when I tried to do homework. My grandmother told me that paper would not feed us. I had to help out with the food staples first before playing or doing school assignments. This was the proper education we gained at the youngest stages of our lives. When parents or caretakers wait to discipline or teach children these proper behaviors at a later stage, it will be more difficult because the mind system has already been set, and openness is tougher to regain in later stages.

Distinguished Elders and parents taught us about the essence of Indigenous cultural identity awareness specifically when outsiders began to arrive in the region. As a naïve village girl, I wanted to look, behave, and speak like the teacher because she looked very different. She had white skin, spoke a language we could not understand, dressed in bright-colored clothing, and wore high heels and heavy make-up. The teacher put make-up on us, and I felt so proud to look like my non-Indigenous teacher. During a family meal, my father took one look at me and immediately asked me to go wash my face. As a young girl naturally, my feelings were hurt as I went to wash. When I returned to the table, my father said, "The creator provided us with our genuine ways of being, living, looking and behaving. You must always remember who you are as a Yup'ik person and never be ashamed of how you look, how you speak, and what you eat." This was the critical moment when I realized how important it was to be aware, to honor, and to respect our Indigenous identity. It is essential to

maintain and sustain our genuine Indigenous sense of awareness and consciousness, as my father said.

This is one Indigenous family illustration of how our parents taught us with strict *qanruyuutet*. My father was not concerned about how his words of wisdom could hurt my feelings. His key point for me was to understand that I would always be *Arevgaq*, who was raised with a fluent language, and with multiple *qanruyuutet* to use as my cane in my lifelong journey.

Another important lesson I learned while living in the two segregated worlds of the traditional village culture and the school culture was that I needed to be able to adapt and adjust my sociolinguistic skills at an early age. My parents, who had never experienced Western education, had no clue as to what we were being taught in school. So it was up to me to learn to live in two worlds, one at home and one at school. Each culture featured its own languages, activities, and values. Ultimately, I learned about cultural clashes that I could not share with my parents because they had never experienced such incidents. I quickly learned that I could act like my teacher—speak like her and behave like her—only in the school environment and not at home. When I left the school, I switched hats to remember always to be a genuine Yup'ik person with a strong cultural foundation, identity, values, and principles to live by. The tension between an epistemology that is all about interdependency of separate worlds and the social experience of negotiating two cultures that are difficult to integrate are human issues that require intellectual checks and balances.

The multiple complex Yup'ik conceptual/theoretical frameworks and methodologies in Yugtun are called *qanruyuutet*, *qulirat*, and *qanemcit*. The *qanruyuutet* are traditional educational frameworks that include, but are not limited to, the *qaneryarat*, *ayucirtuutet*, *inerquutet*, *alerquutet*, *elucirtuutet*, *piciryarat*, and *yagyarat* (Fienup-Riordan, 2005). The Yup'ik tools of *qanruyuutet* (advice), *qulirat* and *qanemcit* (oral stories) are categorized in Table 1 to explain how these are part of the traditional knowledge construction system.

The Powerful Mind

The notion of the mind being powerful was highlighted in the traditional knowledge system because without a powerful mind, one might lose a sense of connection with one's psychological realm. The mind has feelings, senses, awareness, organization and the ability to travel even into other dimensions of the world (Fienup-Riordan, 2005).

It was traditionally believed that humans and nonhumans could hear each other's minds and could identify their emotional states. Because they had developed the highest psychological processes, they could converse silently without words. Shamans have a more highly developed ability to do this than other people. The mind is considered vulnerable because one does not know who is listening out there. This is why our parents and Elders warn us not to think negatively or gossip about anybody even in

Table 1
Qanruyutet, Qulirat, Qanemcit (John, 2009)

<i>Qanruyutet</i>	<i>Qaneryarat</i> <i>Ayuqucirtuutet</i> <i>Alerquutet</i> <i>Inerquutet</i> <i>Elucirtuutet</i> <i>Piciryarat</i> <i>Yagyarat</i>	Words of wisdom that inscribe proper ways of living
<i>Qaneryarat</i>	The ways with words	Instructional terminologies used in giving advice
<i>Ayuqucirtuutet</i>	Wisdom	Instructions on ways of living
<i>Alerquutet</i>	Words of wisdom or “how to”	Instructions and advice about proper ways of living
<i>Inerquutet</i>	Warnings or the “do nots”	Warnings about improper ways of living
<i>Elucirtuutet</i>	Directions or instructions	
<i>Piciryarat</i>	Ways of performing critical social practices: <i>Ukvertaryarat</i> : ways of believing <i>Niisngayarat</i> : ways of following directions and words of advice <i>Pingnatuyarat</i> : ways of surviving by constant hard work	
<i>Yagyarat</i>	Traditional abstinence practices: Examples concerning childbirth and illness and some other conditions: Avoid mixing of human scents between female and male, specifically during puberty: A girl’s menstrual cycle cannot mix with hunting equipment, land and spirits Death: families cannot use sharp objects (uluq, axe, needles) while spirit journeys home for a few days	
<i>Qulirat</i>	Oral traditional stories of ancestors’ accounts: Animal and human transformational accounts	Instruction on the Traditional Knowledge System
<i>Qanemcit</i>	Personal accounts of events and activities	Instruction on the Traditional Knowledge System

the silence of our own thoughts. The mind is considered to be alive like a human, with senses and vulnerability. In the past there have been events where silent negative thoughts have caused emotional and mental pain that resulted in negative actions. For example, a villager who talks negatively about a shaman's family condition or situation can be cursed for years. I know of a distant relative who criticized the marriage of the sibling of a shaman, and later her children were cursed by having dysfunctional marital situations as long as the bloodline existed. The curse remains true today, as the children still experience more problems than other families. This is why there is a warning not to hurt powerful minds of the people.

The whole community of Elders, parents, shamans, and relatives bond together to build the essential individual, family, and group psychological foundation with shared ideology, ontology, world view, knowledge, compassion, and epistemology.

Educating a Child's Awareness

Teaching children begins when they reach a certain level of awareness, including those who become aware at the fetal stage. The attainment of this level of awareness is unique for each individual. The method of the Indigenous/Yup'ik construction of knowledge begins with teaching a child how to be attentive, how to listen carefully, and how to internalize lessons and morals (Andrew & John, 2006). Children are taught once and are expected to remember the lesson at the end of one instructional session. They are taught to use their ears conservatively and not to waste valuable information. I remember that the metaphor told by my grandparents was to listen with the right ear and to close the left ear so that the information remained internalized and would not escape through the left ear. Certain teachings like *inerquutet* and *qanruyuutet* are repeated frequently. Thus, it is said, we will remember them automatically in situations where we need them such as when we fall through the ice and have to react correctly without thinking. The educators articulated that if we listened by remembering the Yup'ik methodology, we would not forget what had once been taught to us. The philosophy behind the Indigenous listening method is that children will learn from their first observation and experience. Listeners are taught to hear and internalize Indigenous knowledge from the first lesson, and children will remember the one-time lesson from their experience. This means that in the next lesson, their psychological memory clock will automatically be set to the second clock to internalize the new information. Essentially, it is not necessary to repeat Indigenous knowledge lessons to children. For children who required continual instructions, relatives and Elders outside the family provided them. Elders emphasize conservative Indigenous educational methodologies to develop higher psychological processes.

Memory skills are part of the essential methods of instruction to the youth. The internalization process in the construction of knowledge was

emphasized through the stories that have lessons, morals, and metaphors. The narrative images of events, accounts, and principles and values were used as tools to validate the truth about the Indigenous knowledge system through stories and examples.

The mind of humans and nonhumans is regarded as a living being with diverse characteristics, which include power, spirit, cognition, creativity, intellect, imagination, stubbornness, and maneuverability. These are the domains of the inner speech. Elders remind us to explore and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of our minds in our daily lives. The critical responsibility of the individual is to nurture, monitor, analyze, modify, and process the conditional and unconditional activities in the inner speech of the mind. The essential Indigenous theory is that the mind is powerful.

Being powerful and spiritual, the mind has unlimited capacities. It is up to the individual to determine how the unlimited capacities are thought out and applied in their lifelong journey. People can develop their own higher psychological processes through methods of education, creativity, exploration, experience, and trial and error. In Yup'ik epistemology, the shamans with their supernatural powers can expel psychological and physical illnesses of other human and nonhuman beings. The mind, being powerful, can challenge the spirits of illness, conflict, and curses and empower material objects that they use as mediators in other-dimensional situations. The mind is believed to be compassionate and knowledgeable when it is nurtured properly. In contrast, shamans who break tribal laws can lose their sense of compassion and turn envious and rebellious. When shamans advance beyond their safety limits, their actions become evil to a point where they can begin to kill other humans. As noted above, shamans are able to negotiate with outer spirits, resolve conflicts, and compromise on behalf of themselves and communities.

The natural world is the tool used by people who elevate themselves to the development stage of higher psychological processes. The first inhabitants were able to talk with nonhumans and other beings to heal their physical, mental, and inner spirits. For example, shamans were capable of healing and improving the welfare of their communities. The breath, land, greens, woods, and wind are essential objects and tools that can assist the healers to connect to and interact with the social, physical, and psychological processes of human and nonhuman beings in this world. The language, drums, music, smudge, and pathways are objects and tools needed by the shamans to execute their job. The Creator has created the world with human and nonhuman inhabitants that share their space and land harmoniously.

The traditional *qanruyun*, advice in the psychological development of the human, the land and the sacred in *Ellarpak* (the big world) highlight the awareness of the metaphysical ecosystem where these integrated elements

are inseparable and dependent on each other for survival. For this reason it is important to act with compassion, knowledge, and respect at all times. As in a family, elements that depend on other people's survival skills must be concerned about a balanced *Ellarpak*.

Elder John Phillip emphasizes how *qanruyun* is beneficial for those who pursue higher education: "The teachings are like something that pushes one to a good life. The one who does not listen will not live a good life. Those who listen and apply the teachings will live good lives" (Fienup-Riordan, 2005, p. 12).

My father Kangrilnguq Paul John thoroughly describes the methodology of educating youth and adults about epistemology.

Back then they taught them thoroughly, even though they did not have books, not holding anything back. They did not fail to mention things because they thought they were embarrassing to bring up. They did not make the excuse that we were young, and would tell us if we did something wrong. These days, if elders feel that it is uncomfortable to bring up, they don't talk about it. Once I scolded them, saying that there is nothing that is embarrassing to talk about while we are teaching.... [A person I knew] was yelled at by the person who instructed him, and he wanted to do the opposite of the *inerquun* that he was given and experience what he was yelled at about. He did not want to adhere [to the *inerquun*]. Once he broke a kayak during the night by stepping on the bottom of the frame. He wondered, "To what extent will that person yell at me when he realizes what I have done?" The next day the person who usually yelled at him, his uncle, whom he usually ignored, spoke to him gently and hit his feelings right on the spot: "Gee, you should not break things that people would like to use." From that moment on, he vowed to follow his instructions because he had told him in a loving way. (Fienup-Riordan, 2005, p. 17)

On the same topic, distinguished Elder Frank Andrew argues that *qanruyutet* are the key to leading a good life:

If we follow and listen to teachings, everything that we work on is finished in a good way. That is what a person's disposition is like. They will not become beautiful by themselves, but the instructions will cause them to become beautiful. Even though their clothing is dirty, they will be attractive by the way they behave.

These instructions are especially important for our younger generation. A child who is not given instructions cannot grow healthy. A plant cannot grow if it is not watered. That is what people are like. Later he added, "*Qanruyutet* were tools that could change one's world. *Qanruyutet* change people's behaviors. All of our material belongings can be fixed with our arms. But a person's nature can only be fixed by *qanruyutet*, only by *ayqucirtuutet*" (Fienup-Riordan, 2005, pp. 11-12).

Everything discussed in this article was passed on to me by my parents, grandparents, and extended relatives through the oral traditional knowledge system that enhances self-awareness and embraces a holistic, interconnected understanding of the human, the land, and the sacred world. Next I explain the Yup'ik epistemological concept of *Ellarpak* by providing two compatible models that are essential to understanding in the educational development of the child's cultural awareness and consciousness.

Ellarpak: The Big World

I trace Yup'ik epistemology by using Indigenous theoretical frameworks and methodologies to capture the sociocultural concept of our world view, *Ellarpak*, which I discuss as the overarching Indigenous framework that describes the holistic interconnectedness of the *Ellam Yua* (the Creator), the human/nonhuman, and the universe. The root *ella-* has many interrelated meanings, and this concept with various shades of meaning forms the basis of much of Yup'ik epistemology. This includes the universe, consciousness/awareness, weather, world, and the outside. In this theoretical framework is an absolute sense of interconnectedness and coexistence of the three elements that are spiritually unified. I investigate and explain the Yup'ik epistemological theories and models that are associated with the development of the mind as explained by the educators.

Upyutlemn: Getting Ready

When exploring the whole concept of Indigenous epistemologies, I began to read Indigenous authors to see how they approached developing their understandings of their own epistemological frameworks. The works of Gegeo and Gegeo-Watson (2001), Foley (2003), and Kawagley (1998) gave me concrete, critical tools to help me as a Yup'ik person to think through and trace my own epistemological roots.

Reading about Foley's (2003) triangular model that includes the human world, the land, and the sacred world reminds me of Kawagley's (1998) tetrahedral metaphor of the Native world view. Foley's triangular diagram is an interpretation of varying positions of the Indigenous Australian standpoint, the philosophy of the Physical, the Human, and the Sacred World, together with the Japanangka West (1998) and Rigney (1999) Indigenist *strategy* approach, where we can begin to understand the complexities and possibly the subject's underlying positioning (Foley, see

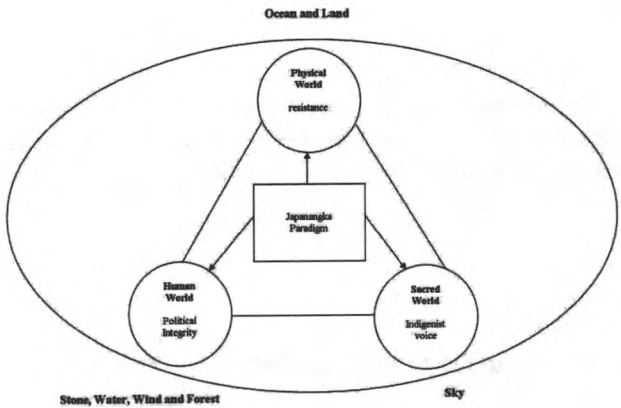


Figure 1. Foley's triangular model.

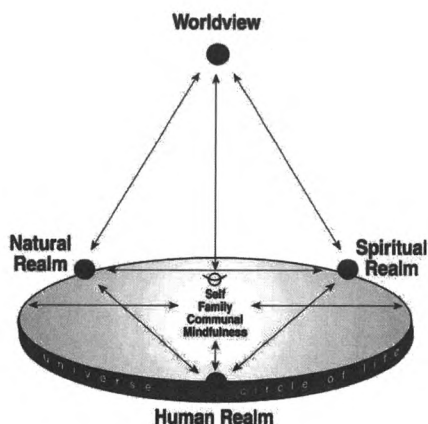


Figure 2. Kawagley's tetrahedral model.

Figure 1). In the center, the Japanangka Paradigm, shown as a box, has lines with arrows going out separately in several directions. In my opinion, the diagram does not truly represent the conceptual theory of the interrelatedness of the Indigenous standpoint, as he uses one-way arrows going out, separating the elements, and it does not show the two-way interaction as discussed in Japanangka's own research.

Kawagley's (1998) tetrahedral metaphor of the Native world view represents a circle of the universe or a circle of life that has no beginning and no end, including the human, natural, and spiritual worlds. There are two-way arrows between them as well as to the world view at the apex that depict communications between all these functions to maintain balance (see Figure 2). In my opinion, Kawagley's model represents the conceptual framework that he discusses fairly well, with arrows connecting everything including the self and communal mindfulness. I believe that Kawagley's model is similar to my idea of depicting the world view using a circular base that connects all elements equally.

Foley's (2003) and Kawagley's (1998) diagrams are similar in their conceptual frameworks of the land/natural, the human, and the sacred/spiritual. Their difference is revealed through how they use arrows in a one- or two-way form to show the interaction and interrelationship among the three elements. Foley's and Kawagley's models led me to create an alternative epistemological theoretical diagram, which I feel represents more accurately what I perceive as a key transparent multi-layered and multidimensional paradigm that I call the *Ellarpak* (see Figure 3).

My *Ellarpak* organic diagram is different because it is multilayered, multidimensional, and shows overlapping of the Creator, the universe, and the human and nonhuman. The key conceptual theoretical framework

is the essence of the unified sense of the core elements' interconnectedness, interrelationship, and transparency, allowing multidimensional dynamic shifting of the layered elements.

The Yup'ik circular-and-dot motif is called *ellam iinga*, literally translated as "the eye of the weather" and "the eye of awareness," the cultural meaning of which parallels the concept of *Ellarpak* along with the shaman's drum design. Yup'ik cosmology can be schematically depicted as successive circles, each simultaneously closed and enclosed. This cosmological circle is a recurrent theme in both social and ceremonial activities and paraphernalia. The use of this decorative motif is associated with both spiritual vision and the creation of pathway(s) between the human and spirit worlds. The central dot, accompanied by four outlying dots, has been identified as a means of both depicting and affecting the five-step movement between the world of the living and the dead (Fienup-Riordan, 1994).

The shamans' drum design depicts the three interrelated realms. The upper world represents the cosmology, birds, and the homeland of the *ircinrrat* or the little people that exist in all realms. The middle world is the balanced world of the humans and nonhumans. The lower world is the homeland of sea mammals and fish. The drum is respected and used in healing and dance and is a place where the ancestors reside, who reunite with us during community ceremonials (John, 2009).

My *Ellarpak* graphic presents an organic design that includes a Yup'ik motif and a shaman's drum (see Figure 3).

Ellarpak is a culturally constructed and reconstructed comprehensive Indigenous sociocultural theory and framework that captures the overlapping organic circular diagram that represents the transparency and fluidity of the three elements to form a unified and balanced spiritual existence.

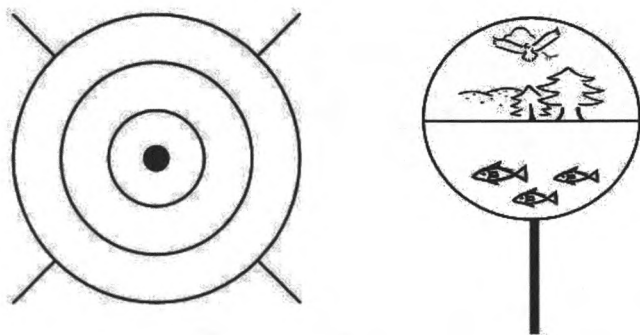


Figure 3. *Ellarpak*.

The Indigenous pedagogy and cultural practices rooted in Yup'ik epistemology that I have learned, experienced, and describe in this article have implications for the early childhood and high school education with a primary focus on child awareness developmental processes.

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