

Alaska Native Graduate Study at UAF



Hishinlai "Kathy Sikorski," Gwich'in Athabaskan, Ph.D. student
Dissertation: Interface of Ideology, Identity, and Politics: Effects on Ancestral Language Learning

Instructor, Gwich'in, Alaska Native Language Center, UAF

"There is genuine solidarity amongst Native graduate students, no matter what their discipline may be. In fact, there is a newly organized group known as the Alaska Student Organization of Native Graduates, which is officially recognized by the university. UAF is on the cusp of change and transformation for indigenous scholars. They recognize and respect indigenous cultures, and have taken great strides to respect this by giving back some land so that a place can be built for future indigenous scholars. UAF has also procured fellowships for Native students. I am from the Interior, and this is where my family and people reside."



Beth Dementi-Leonard, Deg Hit'an Athabaskan (Shageluk)
2007 Ph.D. graduate

Dissertation: Deg Xinag Oral Traditions: Reconnecting Indigenous Language and Education Through Traditional Narratives
Assistant professor, School of Education, UAF

"I'm pleased to have chosen UAF to complete my graduate studies as I had the opportunity to work with noted Alaska Native scholars such as Oscar Kawagley and Phyllis Fast. My home and work are in Alaska, so it would have been more difficult to complete a graduate program outside the state. I also felt it was important to remain closer to family members like my father, James Dementi, and other family members who, during the course of my program, contributed greatly to my understanding of the culture and language of the Deg Hit'an people."



La'ona DeWilde, Koyukon Athabaskan, Ph.D. student
Dissertation: Urban Surface Water Contaminants and Protection Issues in Fairbanks, Alaska, Region

"I know that we pollute the water and air around us, so dedicating my time and efforts on improving our knowledge of how we contaminate our environment and ways to prevent this problem is my calling in science."



“A place where good thinking and working together would happen”

Chief Peter John of Minto used these words to describe Troth Yeddha', *wild potato hill*. Alaska's first peoples came to the hill to gather wild potatoes, and the elders met to discuss important matters and learn from each other. Today, people from all over the world come to the same hill to gather knowledge and learn from each other.

What the elders knew as Troth Yeddha' became the site of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, but the original name has not been forgotten. Troth Yeddha' Park, on the Fairbanks campus, honors the culture and heritage of Alaska's indigenous peoples and adds a physical sense of belonging for Alaska Native students at UAF. It symbolizes the university's role in developing academic and research programs that make it a model for an institutional approach to issues related to indigenous peoples.

UAF graduates one of the highest number of Native Americans in the nation. It offers 57 master's and 17 doctoral degree programs, including an interdisciplinary program. A proposed Ph.D in Indigenous Studies will provide a strong indigenous core emphasis. UAF gives graduate students the faculty, researchers and resources to succeed academically and professionally.

From linguistics to life sciences, UAF has the programs. You have the passion. With good thinking and working together, we can make a difference.

Learn more about graduate work at UAF at www.uaf.edu/gradsch/.



Troth Yeddha'



Theresa John, Yup'ik, Ph.D. student

Dissertation: Yuraryaraput Kangiit-Illu: Our Way of Dance and Their Meanings

Assistant professor, Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development, UAF

“My data collection addressing local elder and community knowledge will enrich multiculturalism and sociocultural research. Research will impact regional, cultural and sociolinguistic efforts to maintain and sustain cultural practices. My personal goal is to complete my Ph.D. thesis, become a tenured faculty member and maintain research in Yup'ik epistemology, ethnography, ethnomusicology, linguistics and social science.”



Walkie Charles, Yup'ik, Ph.D. student

Dissertation: When They are Ready: Dynamic Assessment in a Yup'ik L2 Intermediate Adult Classroom

Instructor, Yup'ik Eskimo, Department of Alaska Native Languages, UAF

“I collected data in a second-year Yup'ik grammar class in fall 2008 followed by writing my dissertation in January 2009.

I'm identifying what constitutes assessment, what it means to learners of a second language, and finding ways that assessment becomes a dynamic process by which a language learner takes ownership of his/her learning. My study involves indigenous knowledges, critical pedagogy and sociocultural theory.



Jordan Lewis, Aleut, Ph.D. student

Dissertation: Successful Aging Through the Eyes of Alaska Natives: The Health and Wellbeing of Alaska Native Elders in Bristol Bay

“I returned to UAF to pursue my doctoral degree because it provided me opportunities to engage in community health research and work firsthand with Alaska Native elders. The university's financial support of my research and dedication to working with Alaska Native communities is important as I pursue my education in Alaska. I wish to continue working with Native communities after graduation.”