

Alaska First Nations Research Network

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Mokakit—to strive for wisdom. What a singularly appropriate word that our Canadian relatives share with us, the Alaska Native people. With the goals and objectives of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and Alaska Rural Challenge, it is timely that Alaska Native educators, teachers, teacher aides, bilingual teachers, parents and elders establish a chapter of Mokakit called the Alaska First Nations Research Network (AFNRN).

The objectives of Mokakit are:

- to foster higher education among First Nations,
- to promote and enhance individual and group research initiatives,
- to review and highlight current research information,
- to organize and host conferences related to Mokakit concerns,
- to conduct workshops and seminars in research methodology,
- to provide a resource base for First Nations communities,
- to maintain an inventory of research studies in Native education,
- to identify critical areas for research in Native education which are not being addressed and
- to encourage Native graduate students to address these areas in their research theses and dissertations.

The objectives are certainly those to which we subscribe. As we embark on pathways to Native education, to include Native languages, ecosophy, spirituality and lifeways, and seek ways to incorporate English and the various disciplines from the Western world to the newly developed courses of study, calls for such an organization. Ecosophy is the

seeking of wisdom from the ecological system in which one finds oneself. Nature is the university of the universe. Ellam Yua has placed many models of knowing within it, all we need to do is seek with mind and soul to get a sense of knowing and letting it work in our lives. For example, we get a message of wonder from the raven—it is never bored and it is constantly exploring its surroundings. Water has the ability to take the form of its container and yet has the potential of awesome power. From it, we learn patience and the practice of soft power. The objectives as recounted above are qualitative and comprehensive. They will help in setting ways to assess the change processes in Native language acquisition and learning of Native ways of creating identity, developing uniqueness, seeking natural models of knowing and getting a sense of accomplishment. Educators who are trained in research must begin to develop partnerships with teachers, aides, parents and elders in doing research. We realize that trained researchers are not the only ones capable of doing noteworthy and useful research. On behalf of Mokakit and AFNRN, I encourage anyone interested in education to join as we need all the expertise that is out there.