

## Alaska RSI and Annenberg Rural Challenge Plans for a New Year

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There have been consortium meetings in each region this fall. I had the opportunity to attend two of the meetings. Both meetings left no question that education must change to accommodate the Native world views. The first was in Bethel with elders and educators. Educators is an inclusive term involving all within the community as teachers. The people with MOAs were apprised of the expectations for the forthcoming year.



*Participants at the Southeast Native/Rural Education Consortium in Juneau*

The parameters and end process products were discussed with the group so that no misunderstandings or misconceptions arise during the new calendar year. The cultural standards elicited a lively response. Several changes were advanced by the group. The

term “teacher” for the “Standards for the Teacher” was changed to “educator” because it included all in the village. The term “balance” was defined in Yupiaq as pitallgerturluni which is to say that a person walks a life that feels right. The person is living a life that they deem right to become the very best that they can be. The life essences of spirit, emotion, intellect and physical are upheld to meet the ultimate standards of the Native values and traditions.

The meeting in Unalaska was no exception in my mind. The leaders and educators expressed a need to relearn the Aleut language and dialects and to reconstruct Aleut history. As with other Alaska Native tribes, their history and language is replete with words and technology that intimately describe and suit their world views. They, as with other Native villages, recognize that interchanges of Aleut and English when speaking Aleut or vice versa debilitate the use of either language. So that many of the people and students never master either language. The Native people can be in an all or predominately English speaking community and not use “standard” English. A good question is “why”? I am sure that there are many variables to the answer but I can say, without reservation, that we will be able to answer this in the near future.

The Elders Academy was discussed and plans made for future meetings for elders and cultural camps. The term “tradition” and its definition was discussed. It was finally agreed that it was the Native ways of making a life and a living with all their concomitant rules for life, cautions and precepts for living a good life.

The regional meetings show that Alaska Native people have many world views on different paths but the ultimate vision is the same.