

# **A Native View of Culturally Relevant Education, an invited essay**

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## **Introduction**

In the following paper I will argue for a change in science curricula, and teaching processes, and a need to recognize Native ways of knowing, learning, and implementing knowledge. I have observed and taught in rural and urban classrooms in which science was taught from textbooks, using the scientific method, and using age-tested science experiments (Cajete, 1986). My own undergraduate science education was derived from textbooks, and laboratory manuals. These teaching/learning processes do not, however, take advantage of the students' environment, or the environment's ecological processes. Nor do they prepare the students to recognize a "Creative Force" flowing in and around them at all times. This removal of the mystical force from scientific processes has rendered a society which places primary credence and faith on observational and rational faculties of man. Once this happens, we have a society in which the quality of man and life diminishes (Schumacher, 1977), a society which no longer honors and reveres nature, but often misuses, abuses, and disrespects nature. One could argue, therefore, that our science education contributes to the decay of society with a concomitant diminishment of morality.

Consider the following statement, describing the role of man in American society:

... a human robot; a worshipper of machines, brain-washed by the movies, advertising and television, devoid of tradition, of family life, of self-intimacy; a money-maker for whom the dollar is the only universal value; a super-hygienic food washer who cleans vegetables with chlorine, totally depersonalized,

conditioned to live in a spiritual vacuum; in short, a science fiction nightmare and a bore ... (Lillibridge, 1968)

This statement describes the dark side of America, but it provides little guidance on how we might go about improving the situation, or what can be done to counteract the “spiritual vacuum.” Before the nation can give respect to the mystical forces, people need to learn to respect earth as a living organism, so how can we foster such respect in the process of teaching “science”?

According to Carl Popper (Campbell, 1988:11), “Science must begin with myths and with the criticism of myths,” which **“tell us how to relate to nature and the cosmos, the act of living, and how to live in it”** my emphasis). The educational process needs to go beyond the limits of sciences which are built around bodies of knowledge that are restricted to objects of the earth. This so-called “objective knowledge”, which is based on factual observation of observable phenomena, is constricting of more encompassing thought. In Native thought there is a similar idea, which is translated as “seeing without feeling.” In Western thought, this way of knowing has the greatest value as being objective. According to Western thought, “subjective” knowledge is less reliable because it is not verifiable through the senses. The Yupiaq word, “tangruarluku” which means “to see with the mind's eye”, transcends that which we can perceive with our endosomatic sensemakers, and illustrates how a Native perspective may provide a way of bridging the so-called subjective mythical world, and the objective scientific world. The following paper argues for changing science education to encourage Native students to enter the fields of science, to give cognitive respect to the Natives' applied science, and to recognize mystical sources of knowledge.

The “symbolic universe” of modernity has several factors that grate against the universes of the Alaska Natives. According to the Berger, Berger, and Kellner, the symbolic universe includes rationality or a person's ability to reason things out, also referred to as “functional rationality.” Its branches of knowledge include componentiality, or the ability to reduce things into smaller and smaller parts as they are studied. This reductionism includes specialization in various disciplines which requires that spheres of study be focused into smaller and smaller areas of concentration. It espouses multi-rationality, that these could have a variety of relations to people, objects or abstract things. It has the notion that any problem, whatever it might be, has a “makeable” solution. It contains a plurality of parts or things included in its construction as a world view. It advances the notion of “things can always be improved”; the upward and onward mentality of new and improved. It caused teaching and learning to move into a decontextualized and incremental mold (Gamble, 1986:23; Ryan 1989:391; Scollon & Scollon, 1979:206).

Componentiality or reductionism requires that its constituents have an identity distinct from the world around them (Freeman & Carbyn, 1988:8). These then are the salient distinctive elements of the “symbolic universe” of modernity.

The modern Yupiat possess an inordinate number of psycho-social maladies (Napoleon,1991). Plans and methods for resolution of these problems are put forth from the outside world. These constructed these solutions with the accompanying Western curricula, values, tools, knowledge and skills are imposed from another world view without regard to their appropriateness to the Yupiat world view and needs. This contributes to many of the contradictory attitudes that may underlie the basic feelings of acceptance of the modern technological advances. How then can the Yupiat exert their powers to begin to influence change on their own behalf? We can begin by reconstructing science curricula to reflect a Yupiaq world view. Science, and the motivation to know, is the infrastructure of all education. Yupiaq science has the Yupiaq consciousness ineluctably embedded in the application of intelligence, ingenuity, and creativity.

## **Literature**

Literature abounds from authors of various countries that encourage a modification of the Western world view (examples, to do). These views are usually reactions to the drastic changes on the earth's surface which are due to the uncontrolled extractive and exploitatitive nature of modern development. Vast amounts of renewable and non-renewable resources are needed to meet the demands of industrialized countries. The refinement processes produce wastes very often detrimental to the environment. Innocent bystanders, especially indigenous peoples who inhabit the Third World countries, become victims of international cartels and corporations.

According to a Western Canada Wilderness Committee Educational report

Borneo today represents a microcosm of this global disaster in the making. It is now at the threshold point. An immediate moratorium on logging in Sarawak's primary forests must be imposed to protect the remaining forest ecosystem and the people who live there. Thailand, following great loss of human life from flooding due to deforestation, has recently outlawed all logging. But Thailand, West Malaysia and the Philippines are already largely deforested. In Borneo, there is still an opportunity to set a different course. Borneo's rainforests and its tribal peoples hold answers to questions we have not yet thought to ask. Their loss will have global consequences more than we can imagine. ...No forest dwellers on earth have lived in harmony with their environment longer than the

Penan of Borneo. Their knowledge of this ecosystem, its foods, medicines and secrets *goes beyond current scientific understanding.* (1990)

Such is often the subject of news items and publications. The call is to temper Western consumption of resources in its desires to meet the demands of its insatiable people. Advertising plays a major role in whetting the desires for bigger, faster responding, non-essential instruments which are highly consumptive of non-renewable and energy resources.

Increasingly, these issues are being raised in articles and publications by indigenous peoples from various parts of the world. These vary in subjects from agriculture with encouragement to veer away from oil-based to past practices more conducive to organic growth and soil conservation, to proposals that advise “sustainable” economic development, and getting a re-definition of employment in light of this new direction. These ideas are often very difficult for members of the Western world economy to visualize and implement, as well as for many of the Native people who have been educated in the Western system. It is possible the entrenched views will not change for the majority until a cataclysmic ecosystemic change occurs that makes life a hardship or ends it for a significant segment of the population.

Publications such as *Keepers of the Earth* (Caduto & Bruhac, 1989), *Science Alive!* (NWT, 1988), and many other similar articles address this need to include Native knowledge and skills in science education, though in some cases, the type of inclusion is very superficial. This may be due to prior schooling and forms of consciousness that foster a degree of removal from the past in understanding the constructed world. For the most part, our educational systems do not teach us to question the modern world view, but teach us to be conformers. It is becoming increasingly apparent, however, that the Yupiaq villages must reconstruct their own reality to repair the damage that has been done to them and to their environment. Science education must reflect an integration of their knowledge and skills with appropriate modern knowledge and skills. The modern technological tools must be used to undo much of the environmental damage that has been done. These complex technological tools must be understood and used to devise a “soft technology” which is more attuned to Nature. The Yupiat will then have to take a look themselves and, perhaps, redefine the conditions for a quality of life that will fit the new paradigm.

The modern “prescriptive technology” (Franklin, 1990) leaves little room for people to think about technology, or be participants in its development; rather it is left to the experts. Every news medium carries some story that depict social, economic, and human

costs of modern prescriptive technology. This is true all over the world. The Yupiaq, because of their relative isolation until fifty years ago, still have half of its members as “real people” living in a real world. (“Yupiaq” means “real, genuine people.”) Because of modern technology and communications, this real world's walls are slowly being eroded. There are some villages, like Bethel, that are already pseudorealities and pseudocommunities. About 60% of the Bethel population is non-native who, for the most part have no ties to the land nor to the Native people. Many are there because of natural resources and economic opportunities to be exploited, including the Native people.

### **Areas Of Inquiry**

The following are areas of inquiry to be pursued in this research:

1. Is there a reawakening to a traditional Yupiaq world view that is supported by a tempered Western technology to reconstruct a real people in real communities?
  - a. Assess feelings and attitudes about the Yupiaq world view.
  - b. Assess feelings and attitudes about the social, economic, and human conditions as they exist under the present Western dominated form.
  - c. Assess attitudes towards education (including schooling) and its ability to influence change in consciousness.
2. How can we reconstruct science education to reflect the Yupiaq world view with selected Western knowledge and skills infused.
  - a. Assess attitudes toward such a change. Enumerate instances of deliberate instruction and discussion, reflecting examples of adaptation and modification of Western tools to fit their needs and environment.
  - b. Examining approaches and methods of change being used.
  - c. Cite values expected to be foremost in the development of new social, economic and human technologies which include organization, procedures and methods, formulas, symbols, new words, and a mindset (consciousness).

### **Description Of YUPIIT Area**

The area of interest to me is the YUPIIT Nation and its school system. This tribal governed nation is located on the Kuskokwim River and is composed of three Yupiaq villages. They are Akiachak, Akiak, and Tuluksak. Their populations vary from 275–500. The

largest village is Akiachak which is the seat of government for the nation. It is located approximately seventeen (17) miles downriver from Akiak.

Alaska regions are inhabited by indigenous groups who call these places home. Alaska, the land of the midnight sun, extends from the Arctic to the subarctic. The ecological systems change markedly the further one goes North. The people of the Arctic and subarctic maintained and sustained a subsistence economy (Netting, 1986). The world views of the peoples of these regions recognized that the land was a giver of life. The land became their life and their metaphysic. Thus they lived to the circadian rhythm of the universe.

The following is an attempt to present a way of making the modern organizational structure less militaristic by becoming more egalitarian, cooperative and having a “loosely coupled” organization (Barnhardt, 1977:62). Fienup-Riordan has stated that there were many Westerners who were doubtful as to whether the Yupiit Nation would work at all. This, because in the eyes of the Westerner, it lacked a bureaucratic system with tiers of high paid, well-titled workers. Now the villages in the Association of Village Council Presidents region are considering a Tribal Government for the whole region. This, after three small villages defied the Federal and State governments and faced the uncertainty of conflicting laws and a reluctant bureaucratic system to establish their own tribal government (Fieup-Riordan, 1990:205).

### **A Thumbnail Sketch Of Alaska Native Lifeways & Experiences**

Before the time of colonization, the people in Alaska experienced a quality of life that was in balance with very limited needs. Their technology was developed to be in tune with their world views. For the nomadic people, material wealth was a burden, it was an impediment to mobility. This is where property and mobility become overtly contradictory (Sahlins, 1976:12). Today, by the standards of the rich nations, Alaska Natives are poor, but in times past they were wealthy by their own standards. Poverty is the invention of industrialized nations. New needs are created by these rich nations and scarcity is a judgment decreed by these nations to keep themselves supplied and producing goods (Sahlins, 1976:4). The industrial enterprise is extractive and exploitative of natural resources (including people) and it has upset other peoples' economies in pursuing its own interests. The few Native people who are able to get jobs, now working for multinational corporations to extract natural resources out of their lands. Money is needed to satisfy new wants, and the people are seduced and succumb to the demands of the world market at the expense of themselves and the environment.

In distant time, education was well-suited to the people and to their ecological systems. Education was a part of life! It was provided effectively and stress-free by parents, family, extended family and the community (Hopson, 1977:1; Darnell, 1979:431). Every member knew that they would have a part in the community and be a contributing member. They took care of the community and the community took care of them. This education's foremost purpose was to assure that the principles or rules for constructing a cognitive map for life was learned well by all people (Spradley, 1980). From this they would make tools for making a living. The environment was their school, their cathedral, and reading of its natural processes gave meaning to all life. The elders were there to give guidance with natural meanings and spiritual matters. However, into their history came a tornado in the form of Western colonists. The colonists world views clashed with that of the Native peoples. They were told in no uncertain terms that their ways of life were inferior and that these would have to be changed to fit the newcomers values and ways. As a result, the Native peoples suffered a loss of control over their daily lives (Darnell, 1979:432; Hopson, 1977:3; Yupiktak Bista, 1977:71). Education was one of the first colonial institutions. Colonial administrators began to plan the fate of a people of which they were not a part. Their ways were considered “superior,” and in pursuit of their own imperial needs, they disregarded the needs of the Native people. .

The Native peoples were not the initial targets of colonial educational efforts, however. In Alaskan education, the Native students came after the newcomers and half-breed children of civilized parents (Darnell, 1979). In Alaskan education, it was the newcomers first, with children of Alaska Natives next. The priority was established on the basis of the position the particular group of people had in commercial and industrial production. The Alaska Native people held the lowest positions in the labor market. This segmentation of labor and schooling was in effect a form of racial discrimination (Darnell, 1979:445; Finley, 1988:v; Katasse, 1977:112).

The colonial educational system was destructive in all regions, for the schooling consumers and the educational system did not educate Native people for a meaningful life (Kirkness, 1977:14-7). These educational systems were not structured to give knowledge and skills to Native youngsters for service to their people and country, but rather to give service to the colonial government. This cognitive imperialism induced human inequality through the domination of the weak by the strong. It was their intent to inculcate the colonial values and to foster docility and obsequious service to the state. The colonial system left in the Native peoples' consciousnesses a sense of subordination, after having achieved happiness and a satisfactory self-controlled life, it left the people feeling confused and debilitated. This type of educational structure was the epitome of

education for inequality (Egede, 1985; Kirkness, 1977:14; Okoko, 1987:43; Omari, 1990:1; Nyerere, 1968:60). Most schools were located in urban areas with dormitories for youngsters coming in from rural areas (Darnell, 1979:433; Pratt, 1976:223). The rationale behind residential schools was to facilitate the shift away from their languages and lifeways, and to separate them from the influence of their parents. Many were too young to really be able to cope with a new environment and this removal from family, friends, and community caused psycho-social problems in later life. As in the aftermath of a tornado, everything was in a shambles. It was a cataclysmic change (Canadian Journal of Native Education, 1991).

Natives have their own way of looking at and relating to the world, the universe, and to each other. These ways have seldom been recognized by the expert educators of the Western world. The Western system is instituted to inculcate Western knowledge and values which, many Natives and a number of non-natives are beginning to realize, don't always mesh well with the Native world view. Because of this, and other reasons, the school's classrooms have often been battlefields for Native children (Chrisjohn, Towson & Peters, 1998:257).

Very little can be done to alter the new schools; the ones built since the late-1970s. The physical structures are basically all the same; very angular, built off the ground on pilings, electric lighting and machines, oil-fired furnaces with an expensive non-freezing fluid within a closed piping system for carrying the heat to all the rooms. These systems are operated by a very complex computer system which often requires expert help from a central office (village or city) when something goes wrong with it. The maintenance costs of these schools is prohibitive; the costs of electricity, oil, maintenance service, and dependence on imported parts and equipment have virtually made dinosaurs of these structures. This is a problem with unfathomable consequences for administrators to deal with in the future (Dubbs & Barnhardt, 1982).

Since the very first Native students walked into a highly organized and structured school building, they experienced a wide range of difficulties. The curricula, textbooks, language, and teaching methods are foreign to the Native student (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1974:141; Keesing 8; Locust 1988:315; Wilson 3). This convergence of two very different world views causes much of today's students' social, psychological, and educational problems. The collision of the two has left indelible scars on the Native consumers of education.



The concept of “world view” is very closely related to the definitions of culture and cognitive map (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1974:148). A world view consists of the principles we acquire to make sense of the real world around us. These principles, including values, traditions, and customs, are learned by youngsters from myths, legends, stories, family, community, and examples set by community leaders (Deloria, 1991:18, Hardwick, 1991:34). The world view, or cognitive map, is a summation of coping devices which have worked in the past, and may or may not be as effective in the present (Netting 1986:98). Once a world view has been formed, the people are then able to identify themselves as a unique people. So the world view enables its possessors to make sense of the world around them, make artifacts to fit their world, generate behavior, and interpret their experiences. As with many other indigenous groups, the world views of the traditional Alaska Native peoples have worked well for their practitioners for thousands of years.

### **Alaska Native World View**

Among Alaska Native peoples there exist several languages and dialects and, concomitantly as many world views or variations thereof. Thus, rather than attempt to describe all, I will deal with the more prominent characteristics of the Alaska Native world views.

The Alaska Native peoples have, as culturally mandated, traditionally tried to live in harmony with the world around them. This required the construction of an intricate subsistence based world view, a complex way of life showing how the human being was to relate to other relatives, nature and the spiritual worlds.

This world view as demonstrated by the Alaska Native peoples, contains a highly developed social consciousness and sense of responsibility (Fienup-Riordan, 1990:209; Freeman & Carbyn, 1988:2, 7, 19, 43; Locust 1988:328). Their myths, rituals and ceremonies were pleasing to their practitioners, and deemed worthwhile in their relationship to their environment (Fienup-Riordan, 1990:32). Fienup-Riordan goes on to postulate that wisdom, sight and knowledge of power are considered the prerogative of the elders (1990:55) who were honored and respected in recognition of their achievement. Attitude was thought to be as important as action, therefore one was to be careful in thought and action so as not to injure another's mind (1990:73). For one to have a powerful mind was to be “aware of or awake to its surroundings” (1990:74).

To help along this circular path many rituals and ceremonies were made, among which were those of motherhood and child-rearing, care of animals, hunting and trapping

rituals, and related ceremonies for maintaining and sustaining balance between the human, natural and spiritual realms. This innate sense of harmony with all things was critical to maintenance of balance (Freeman & Carbyn, 1988:76; Locust, 1988:321; Scollon & Scollon, 1979:187). A hallmark of Alaska Native peoples, more particularly the Yupiaq, was their success at adapting to ever changing environmental conditions “while strengthening their cultural integrity” (Bielawski, 1990:5). This demonstrates the Alaska Native peoples' ability to construct and continuously modify their world views as “new” Native traditions evolved (Fienup-Riordan, 1990:121). The advice to the villagers would then be to “Take the best from the white man's knowledge by acquiring a formal education in the field of your choice, while affirming the Indian spiritual world view. Revere your heritage” (Martin, 1991:28).

The Alaska Native and other indigenous peoples have been referred to as the “original ecologists” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990:32). One reason for this conclusion is that their world views are ones dependent upon reciprocity; “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” a pledge brought to life.

The cycle of life can not be broken. All of life is recyclable and therefore require certain “ways” of caring in order to maintain the cycle Native people cannot put themselves above other living things as they were created by the Raven—all are an essential component of the environment (Kawagley, 1990). They were able to maintain a sustainable economy because “they possessed appropriate ecological knowledge and suitable methods/technology to exploit resources, possessed a philosophy and environmental ethic to keep exploitative abilities in check and establish ground rules for relationship between human and animals” (Freeman & Carbyn, 1988:7).

For the Alaska Native, teaching and learning was simply a part of everyday life; their teaching and learning were holistic (Bielawski, 1990:7, 10, 12; Wilson, 10). Culturally appropriate knowledge was gained through activity as well as contemplation and observation, and, production of knowledge was also a social activity (Bielawski, 1990:7) This method of knowing by doing and making is is not always compatible with the saying and writing on which knowing in schools is based. “Inuit knowledge is consensual, replicable, generalizable, incorporating, and to so some extent experimental and predictive” (Bielawski, 1990:15). “Predictions” were made on the coming winter's weather, plentifulness or scarcity of fish for the following summer, the coming summer's berries and where they will be most plentiful, etc. This was done by observing and reading the sign-makers of nature, and reflects the power of the thinking Native mind. Predictions are made based on observable phenomena. The Yupiat people do not attempt

to make predictions for an individual, family, or community because it is unseeable; it becomes an abstraction therefore people predictions must not be made.

### **Minimizing Social, Psychological, And Educational Problems In The School**

In reading the above remarks on the two world views, one begins to see that their are various characteristics which clash with one another (Chrisjohn, Towson & Peters, 1988). For example, the “holistic” approach to teaching and learning of the Native people represents a significant difference in perspective from the incremental and componential ways of Western education. The modern idea of “progressivity” results in circumstances where “The mindless rush for new tools, discoveries, and physical progress proceeds at an ever accelerating rate; now the earth itself sheds tears of abuse and environmental stress (Simonelli, 1991:58). On the surface, there does not appear to be any relationship between “modernity” and traditional Native ways of life. However, ways have to be found to integrate some ways of modernity into a new Native consciousness or “being in the world” (van Manen, 1990:11). Many ideas in the modern ideology need redefinition to fit into a “new” consciousness, which can lead to a new form of education for being and becoming. Among these are curricula, policies, language of instruction, teaching methodologies, educational philosophy, administrative practices, educational goals and their realted objectives.

The person charged with the responsibility for administration and coordination of all activities in the rural schools is the principal. Since inception of schools in rural Alaska, s/he has been the primary agent of Western ideology (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1974:103). The pool of Native administrators is limited to a handful, so that villages, through their Advisory School Boards must carefully interview and select their principals from a pool of external applicants. In this situation, the “attitude” of the principal, such as a positive attitude toward the people with whom that person will work, is critical to the success of the school system, i. e., is that employee willing to work with less educated people and take risks in innovative and non-traditional methodologies and programs different from what that person has experienced before. (Harwick, 1991:34)? The principal must also be willing to accommodate the “complex and dynamic quality of evolving educational programs” and s/he must be team- and people-oriented (Barnhardt, 1977:61; Fienup-Riordan, 1990:177; Ryan, 1989:396). In addition, the principal must be adaptive, innovative, flexible and maintain a loosely structured administrative approach, and possess a high tolerance for ambiguity (Barnhardt, 1977:61). Most importantly, s/he must be willing to talk to people, especially the elders, to become knowledgeable of their thinking and ways of doing things, to become generous in thought and action, to reflect

the will of the people and to render actions influenced by the people, to speak out wisely, and to have a peaceful and exemplary behavior (Fienup-Riordan, 1990: 177; Hardwick, 1991:34-5). Further, the person hired to be principal must embody the proclivity to consensus, that is the ability to “talk to arrive at one mind” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990:214). These are the attributes the principal, as leader in a village school must possess. Hardwick (1991:34) goes on to say that a leader is like a tree with roots composed of integrity, ethics and values. She continues by indicating that a leader with this foundation will make decisions based not only on intellect and logic, but with what “feels right” in the heart. A leader not only has the function of teacher but has an open mind and is therefore teachable. The leader strives for knowledge production from the villagers with the realization that a broader and deeper knowledge base must be generated. The collective will can wield such potential power, but “lack a viewpoint or attitude about life which causes such power to be used in concert with a deeper understanding of what it is to be alive” (Simonelli, 1991:59).

Again, with respect to teachers, their selection must be just as stringent as the selection of the principal. Teachers must be willing to learn at least the rudiments of the Native language and culture in order to do an effective job of teaching for “belief systems are the framework upon which cultures and societies function” and the language is its carrier (Locust, 1990:328) . Non-native teachers may be opposed to this idea, but it is a desideratum if a new consciousness is to be developed. It is a process consistent with the Native peoples' sense of holistic teaching and learning.

The principal, teachers, parents, older student representatives, and community members must collaborate in teaching (Scollon & Scollon, 1979:202; Flanders,1). This is a requirement if new innovative and out of the ordinary programs are going to be tried. For example, close coordination and consultation between the various people within and outside the school system are necessary to produce appropriate information- gathering tasks for school students. Parents and students of different grade levels have to be given assignments to match the students' knowledge and skills (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974:130; Fienup-Riordan, 1990:32). This effort creates a team of parents, their offspring, and the community. More importantly, this collaborative teaching and learning avoids making obvious the Native students' deficiencies or inadequacies, which the modern system does so successfully (Ryan, 1989:396; Wilson, 14-8). Self-esteem and self-confidence would rise as the students deal with things that they know about and which is a part of their life. When they can learn about others through their own world views, learning and tedium are no longer synonymous. The above fish camp information gathering takes into consideration the traditional qualitative observation strength of the

hunter and the sizing ability of the homemaker in making clothing with the added dimension of the written word. Not only will their attitudes improve, but it will bring the family closer together, improve interpersonal relationships, notetaking, labelling, and identifying skills, as well as learning better ways of using the written word. This presents a myriad of projects for lessons during the winter. This is a multidisciplinary, multisensory, holistic and exciting approach to education—school work connected to the work and play of the community.

Since the modern education's inception in the villages, the curricula, policies, textbooks, language of instruction and administration have been in conflict with the Native systems. The modern public school systems are not made to accommodate differences in world views (Locust, 1988:316) but to impose another culture—their own (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974:120). This has had a confusing effect on the Native students. Alienation and identity crisis of youth, and the youth forever searching for meaning are a condition of life today (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974:94). New images of modernity collide with traditional symbols, values and beliefs. There is a constant barrage of television programs being beamed into the villages. These establish pseudorealities for the young, and the advertising links up with the desperate expectations for a better life, and because Native people have a less sophisticated sense of deception by modern communications (most often one-way), they think they need and want more (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974:141, 143). They mimick what they see on TV, try to dress like its characters, have fun and recreation with electronic gadgets, long to be beautiful white people with beautiful homes, adopt the mannerisms and language of another world without realizing that these are inimical to their traditional way of life (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974:143). The present educational systems legitimate what is seen and heard as the State still has educational hegemony. Education must remove the mystique of modernity according to Berger, Berger & Kellner (1974:143), and in the class room start addressing the dehumanizing effects of it (1974:160; Egede, 1985; Gamble, 1986:21).

I quote from Patrick Pavilla: “Education is society's means of presenting, enhancing and strengthening its way of life. Native education must serve to accurately and effectively transmit the societal and cultural needs of Alaska Natives. We must perceive education, not only as the intellectual development of the individual for his/her benefit, but also as a social change which will benefit a collective group. Education also must develop an awareness of the social, economic, political, educational, religious, vocations and environmental conditions of our society” (1982:4).

Shortly after statehood (1959), the Yupiat of Akiachak watched Yupiaq hegemony slip further and further away from their villages. Yupik culture was not being used to enhance and strengthen the Yupiaq way of life. As long as control is in the hands of the State and the school district, it was felt that no change would occur. Education must reflect the culture of the village. This was the wish of the villagers of the three upriver villages. The passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 further complicated matters as it relieved villages of control over land and resources. The subsequent law, the Alaska Native Interest Lands and Conservation Act, attempted to reestablish such Native interests as subsistence. But many questions remain and different interpretations of the law abound. Each special interest group attempts to try to interpret and translate the law into their own interest.

The following is taken verbatim from the testimony of the Chairman of the Yupiit Nation Council of Elders (April 13, 1992) because it addresses the concerns and problems as experienced by the Yupiit Nation:

The issue of self-government by the residential indigenous peoples is the important goal of the Yupiit Nation and its member villages. Although there is no clear policy towards indigenous self-government authority from the federal and state government perspective, the movement to revitalize indigenous governments is the strongest within our people in the SouthWestern part of Alaska.

The Yupiit Nation was created by a Resolution 84-07-01 of the PINARIUQ Conference conducted by the Inuit governments of Akiachak, Akiak and Tuluksak on the 6th of July 1984, at Akiachak Native Community.

The purposes of the Yupiit Nation were identified as (1) to strengthen unity among the Yupiit of Southwest Alaska, (2) to promote Yupiit rights and interests on the local, national and international levels of policy development effecting the Yupiit, (3) to ensure Yupiit participation in political, economical and social institutions which we deem relevant, (4) to promote greater self-sufficiency of the Yupiit in Southwest Alaska, (5) to ensure the endurance and growth of the Yupiit culture and societies for both present and future generations, (6) to promote long-term management and use of non-renewable resources in Western Alaska and incorporate such resources in the present and future development of Yupiit economies, taking into account other Yupiit interests.

... The United States government experimented with Alaska Natives by settling lands with corporations rather than with indigenous governments. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act provided 44 million acres of lands to all indigenous residents of Alaska and paid close to a billion dollars for the rest of

our traditional homelands and extinguishment of certain rights. For that reason, the Yupiit Nation view the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act as a genocidal and termination act because of non-involvement of our children born after the settlement of lands. Attempts have been made to provide a transfer to tribes from corporations and inclusion of children into the settlement in the so called 1991 amendments to ANCSA. Although the amendments addressed the indigenous youth, there is no guarantee that they will benefit.

The Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act forced the indigenous residents from hunters and gatherers to become corporate businessmen in a very short period of time. Many of the business corporations are in the face of becoming bankrupt. Because these corporations own the traditional homelands they are being jeopardized of being lost forever. I have to say that some of the village corporations are also doing well and are providing limited benefit to their shareholders.

Because the corporations are visible in all indigenous communities, the tribes economic rights are almost non-visible to almost non-existent. Because of statehood, many of the indigenous communities are organized as governmental entities or subdivisions of State government. Although the indigenous governments do exist, the municipal governments are assuming responsibility on a village level to both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

Because of the emerging of non-indigenous governments and businesses, a way of life of the indigenous residents of Alaska is fast disappearing. Unless people on a grass roots level evaluate their priorities through revitalizing of their traditional governments a way of life will be lost forever.

By involving ourselves in the Indigenous Peoples Preparatory meeting at the Paliat des Nations July 24th to July 28th, 1989 on the drafting of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and our presentation on our developments to the Working Group shows our support on the importance of the adoption by the United Nations on the Universal Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is essential that the Universal Rights of Indigenous Peoples be adopted because many of the principals do not exist for the Indigenous Peoples of Alaska due to lack of clear policy from the United States government.

Two specific examples are the right to ownership of subsurface lands by the villages and individual indigenous peoples of Alaska. The subsurface lands are owned by the regional ANCSA corporations and not the villages. Individual indigenous peoples that own land allotments also do not enjoy subsurface rights and cannot develop them even though the same federal laws are used to grant

land ownership to individual Alaska Natives as the Indians do in the continental United States.

We feel that through the use of the indigenous governments our customs, cultures, languages and histories can be preserved and flourished into the future and benefit the world community in better understanding of each others cultures.

We thank the Working Group for the opportunity to comment on our developments in our homelands and our opinions on the indigenous activities worldwide.

The Akiak IRA (Indian Organization Act of 1934) Council had been formed on May 11, 1949, but had been inactive for quite some time. In 1975 , Congress passed P. L. 93-638 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Title I of this law allowed tribal governing bodies to contract social services which normally were the responsibility of the Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare or the Department of the Interior (Madsen, 1983:5). This enabled the IRA Council to contract their local school followed quickly by the formation of the Yupiit Nation. P. L. 93-638 was the needed catalyst.

The Yupiaq people of the three villages may have realized that the role of government is not to bestow happiness on its people, but to give them the greatest leeway and opportunity to seek happiness for themselves. It is their egalitarian sense that set this in motion. In order to try and restore this altruistic hegemony, or self-government, into the hands of the Yupiat of the three villages, the following events quickly transpired (Fienup-Riordan, 1990).

- a. 1983 declare status as a sovereign nation to reestablish self-government and local control of the lands and resources
- b. increase control over schools by contracting with the State; transmit the societal and cultural needs of the villagers for change, revitalization for a “new Yup'ik” (Madsen, 1983:21)
- c. regain control of the land and resources
- d. self-government would allow the Yupiat to legislate their own lives
- e. “war of position”—hampered by many obstacles
  1. complex issues
  2. statutes
  3. policy and definition
  4. Federal refusal to allow new IRA constitutions
- f. Yupiaq leader as spokesperson for the people

Ideology and Popular Beliefs had to be researched and reported



- a. Yupiaq ways of knowing
- b. research Yupiaq ideas of governance
- c. speaking out to create, maintain, and perpetuate a well-governed society
- d. Yupiaq leaders are eloquent speakers

#### Intellectuals

- a. Yupiaq leaders are eloquent speakers
- b. Tribal Council are the “permanent persuaders”
- c. put into practice the history and framework of Yupiaq governance
- d. formulate pedagogical activities for strengthening processes

#### The Yupiit Nation would allow

- a. self-government and control
- b. use Yupiaq history to establish actions in the present
- c. traditional laws to be effected (Fienup-Riordan)
  - 1. *qaneryaraat*—oral teachings
  - 2. *alerqutet*—laws or instructions
  - 3. *inerqutet*—admonitions or warnings
- d. land management/use laws and policies
- e. fish and wildlife management
- f. tribal corporation

## **New Section (Edited)**

I quote from Patrick Pavilla: “Education is society's means of presenting, enhancing and strengthening its way of life. Native education must serve to accurately and effectively transmit the societal and cultural needs of Alaska Natives. We must perceive education, not only as the intellectual development of the individual for his/her benefit, but also as a social change which will benefit a collective group. Education also must develop an awareness of the social, economic, political, educational, religious, vocations and environmental conditions of our society” (1982:4).

Shortly after statehood (1959), the Yupiat of Akiachak watched Yupiaq hegemony slip further and further away from their villages. Yupiaq culture was not being used to enhance and strengthen the Yupiaq way of life. As long as control is the hands of the State and the school district, it was felt that no change would occur. Education must reflect the culture of the village. This was the wish of the villagers of the three upriver villages. The passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 further complicated matters as it relieved villages of control over land and resources. The subsequent law, the Alaska Native Interest Lands and Conservation Act, attempted to reestablish such Native interests as subsistence. But many questions remain and conflicting interpretations of the law abound. Each special interest group attempts to interpret and translate the law into their own interest.

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