

What Is This Thing Called “Love”?

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Many books and articles have been written on the subject of love, however, I would like to attempt to explain it from the viewpoint of one Yupiaq, myself. Ellam Yua (Spirit of the Universe, God) is the giver of love, the light of intelligence and understanding. Love allows one to do almost anything for something held dear in the heart. It is a powerful emotion which is unconditional. Based on this, I can say that love is a sense of belonging and being in touch with something that is good and beautiful, thus deserving care and harmony.

It then behooves Alaska Native people to instill this sense of love in education, in cultural camps and in everyday life. We want our students to be connected to order, to the patterns and symmetries of this universe. We want them to be able to see the good and the beautiful in their own place. This bonding with place will allow the Native people to do things that will not harm that place, to do things to rebuild, reclaim, regenerate and rehabilitate that place where necessary. They, in essence, will be thinking in terms of the happiness and satisfaction of the Seventh Generation. When some of these Native people become scientists and technologists, they will do things that make them happy as they are immersed in the beauty of the place in which they live. This love of place is sometimes lacking in modern scientists and technologists who are often trained to operate without a heart, such as the Tinman in the *The Wizard of Oz*. Too often scientists and technologists are expected to use only the brain without giving due consideration to the heart. We, as Alaska Native people, must learn to love oneself, love one another (kenkurauulluta), and above all relearn to love place.