

Alaska Native Education Grant

Visual Compendium

A collaborative project to preserve Native knowledge, history, skills and practices.
To provide cultural activities, traditions, subsistence, traditional arts and crafts, dance, and history.



Bristol Bay Native Association
Bristol Bay Campus, University of Alaska Fairbanks
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Funded by Dept. of Education

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Introduction

Preserving Alaska Native Culture and Empowering Communities In Bristol Bay

There are few opportunities in the Bristol Bay region available for youth and adult education in Yup 'igcetun. Today like many indigenous groups globally, Alaska Natives are struggling to keep their culture intact as their Native languages and traditions are being rapidly absorbed into the dominant culture. As Bristol Bay Elders age, they worry that much of their knowledge will be lost. Opportunities for culture bearers to share their cultural and traditional wisdom are few and this invaluable knowledge is at risk of being lost to the next generation of young Native Alaskans.

Studies indicate that education and community health are intricately linked. Native knowledge has to be integrated into the Western curriculum in order to prevent the erosion of cultural identity in the Bristol Bay region. The project has allowed for increased culturally appropriate curriculum and educator training on cultural issues and indigenous values.

Because of the challenge of distance education in the Bristol Bay region, effective culturally appropriate technology and connectivity are years behind urban areas. Technology updates and technology training remain an important part of the project.

The vision of the Preserving Alaska Native Culture and Empowering Communities in Bristol Bay project emphasizes excellent education, improved technological learning and an increased awareness and understanding of cultural values and traditions.

First Light

Since 2012, UAF BBC has been working with the non-profit organization “First Light Alaska” to promote indigenous arts and culture through education, cultural preservation, creative expression, and economic development. Each year, the First Light Alaska event brings international, national, and Alaskan artists to Dillingham to work with people of Bristol Bay. In week-long workshops artists reintroduce art forms that people had not practiced for many years such as drum making, kayaq building, silver engraving, caribou tufting, and other workshops.



First Light Native Artists, above from bottom right, Anna Hoover, Director, Holly Nordlum, Graphic Design, Elaine Kingeekuk, Gutskin Sewing, top right, Swil Kanim, Honor and Music, Rob Kinneen, Art of Local Food, Brad Kahlhamer, Drawing/Painting and Emma Hildebrand, Quillworking.

First Light Alaska is the inspiration of Unangan (Aleut) artist Anna Hoover. Ms. Hoover has made it her mission to bring First Light to Bristol Bay and other rural campuses. The annual event offers participants an opportunity to experience new art forms and to create relationships within their community as well as expanding friendships throughout the Bristol Bay region.

Alaska Native Culture and Empowering Communities in Bristol Bay

Needs Description of BB Aleut Culture



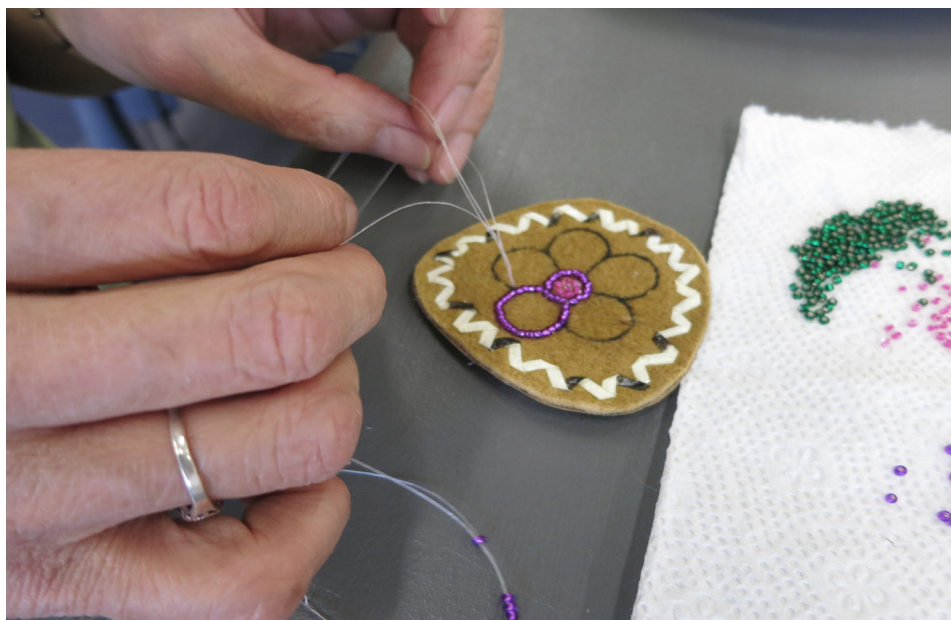


The FIRST LIGHT ALASKA program brought six Native artists to the campus for a two-day training. Each of the artist's sessions addressed the preservation and strengthening of Native Culture and Language. The artist's referenced their unique Native culture while addressing the Native cultural traditions of the Bristol Bay region.

A total of forty-one students attended the two-day event. Participants provided feedback through written evaluations and on-site interviews. One young Native woman stated, "the training forced me out of my comfort zone" and another reportedly was influenced by "the stories the instructor told about respect for the materials used". Statements relating to "learning about my traditions and my world" and "deepening my relationship with myself and my culture" were voiced again and again by the attendees.



One of the Native artists, Emma Hildebrand taught Quillwork and beading. She offered historical and cultural information about the craft she presented. As a culture bearer, she shared her concern about losing traditional Native Alaskan arts and crafts. Ms. Hildebrand expressed praise for “the recent commitment by the grant to restore traditional native culture because it has helped me to be more fearless with my art”. The opportunities to learn about and create from the traditions of the Yu’pik culture have been the active ingredients necessary to achieve the set goals of the ANE grant.





The traditional Yup'ik qaspuk is a thin, hooded garment, usually of cloth with a large front pocket, commonly worn by Alaskan Native women while picking berries or cutting fish. Also used for dancing. The bottom portion may be gathered akin to a skirt.

Michelle Konig, a Native Alaskan, has been a popular artist in the Bristol Bay region and throughout Alaska. She has created a modern version of the traditional qaspuk which has shown to be very well received among all ages. She was raised in Bethel Alaska. Her first attempt at qaspuk making was in elementary school and she became frustrated and did not complete her assignment. Later she asked her grandmother to teach her the art. She related that her grandmother was not a 'teacher' but instead the maker of the garment without any help from Michelle. She tried a third time in college with a course in qaspuk making but again she felt unsuccessful.



In 2009, Ms. Konig moved to Kenai with her husband and growing family. It was there she bought a sewing machine and a box of fabric from a neighbor who was moving. This was her incentive to begin creating her unique designs. She quickly began experimenting and came up with a basic design in which she has continued to add inspiration.

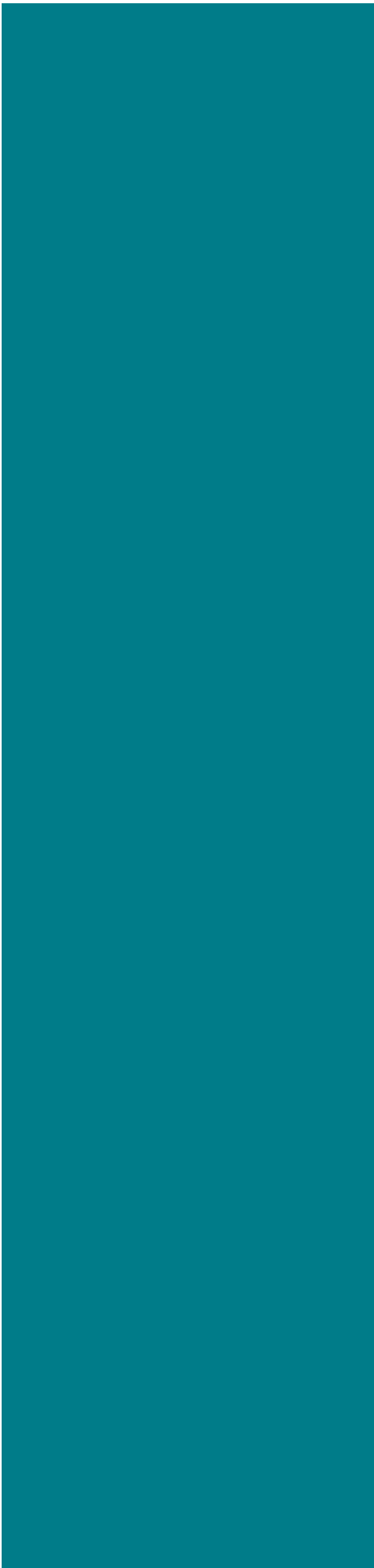


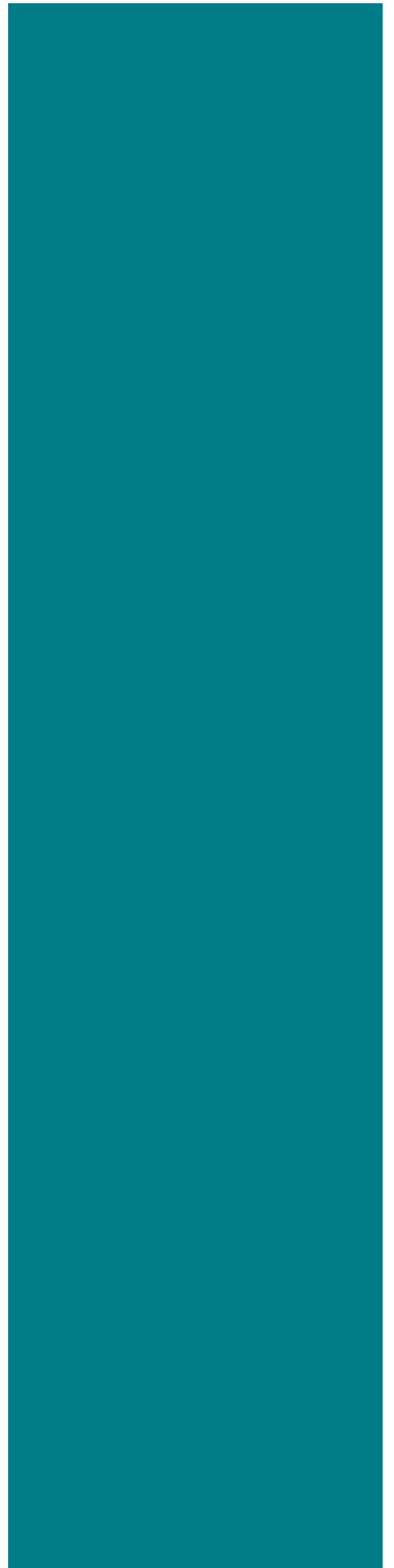


Chef Rob Kinneen brought his food expertise to the First Light training. In his seminar, *The Art of Local Food*, he offered both traditional and creative new ways to prepare regional foods. One participant commented on the increased knowledge in preparing subsistence foods. Another voiced excitement about learning new food preparation techniques and realizing the availability of locally grown foods. Many of the participants expressed a desire to share the information provided with family and friends.



Mr. Swil Kanim brought music and storytelling to First Light at the Bristol Bay campus. With humor, respect and honor, Mr. Kanim spoke of the importance of tradition and culture. His stories, each with a healing message were discussed by the participants in a thoughtful calm way. The message offered by Mr. Kanim resonated with those present.

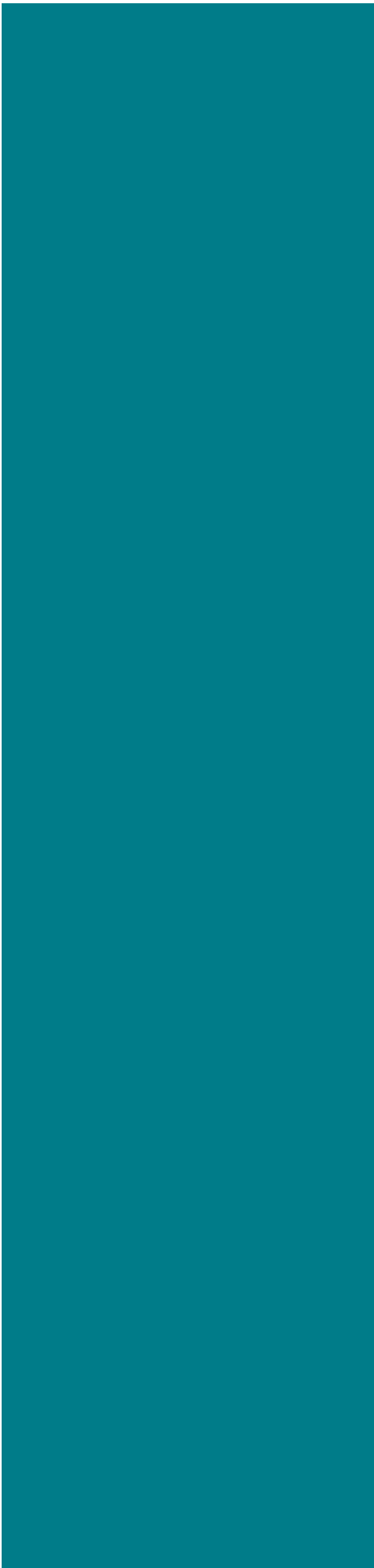


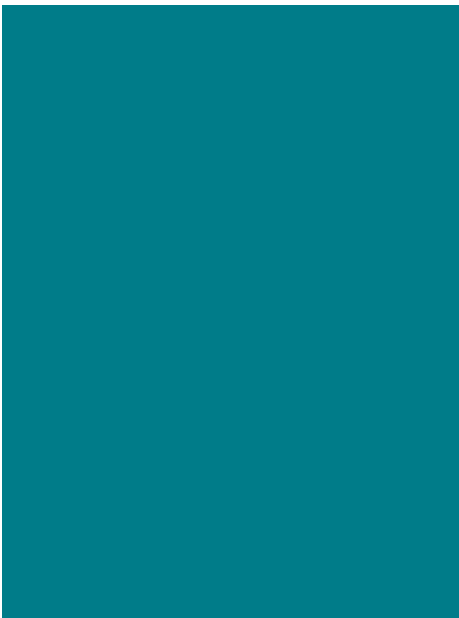


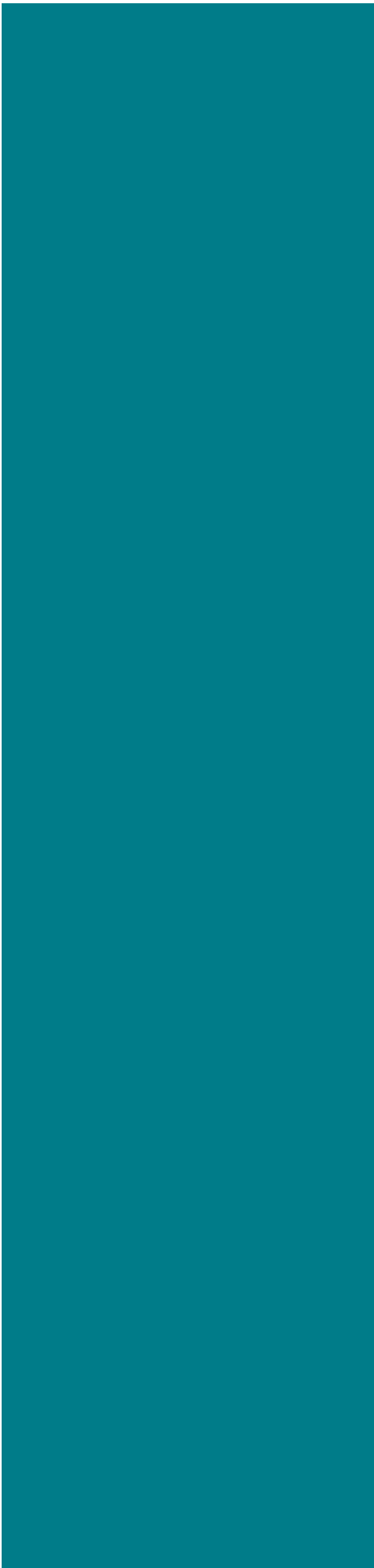


Ms. Holly Nordlum brought her expertise in graphic art as well as ideas for entrepreneurship to First Light. She discussed incorporating traditional native symbols with cutting edge computer graphics in her work. Participants were encouraged to utilize their unique traditions and explore integrating them into a larger model.





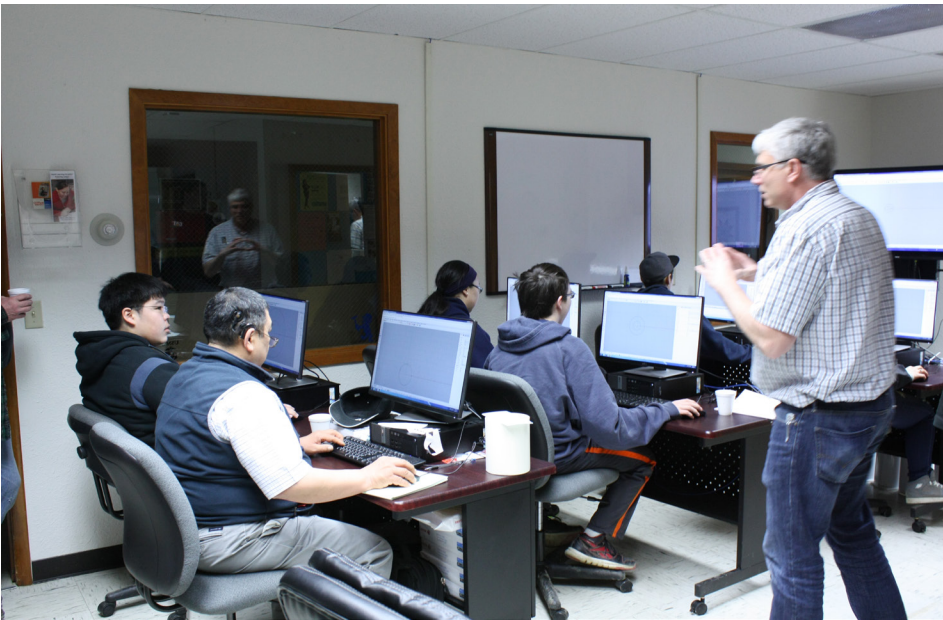




Extending the scope of education to prepare Alaska Native students not only to make a living, but live a fulfilling and sustainable life requires meeting educational needs and expanding economic opportunities in the villages in the ways that allow cultural and identity preservation in a global and technological world (Barnhardt, 2005; Kushman & Barnhardt, 1999).

What is a Fablab?

One goal is to prepare Alaska Native youth and adults for meaningful employment through increased access to education, training, and culturally appropriate applications of technology. Using technology upgrades and cutting edge technology, a fabrication/manufacturing laboratory was designed to open new career pathways in 21st century manufacturing and arts.



Adjunct instructor John Niebergall providing instruction on computer assisted drafting (CAD) software, Rhino 5.0



Adjunct instructor Patrick Kraft, assisting a local student with writing G-code on computer assisted machining (CAM) software, MasterCAM.



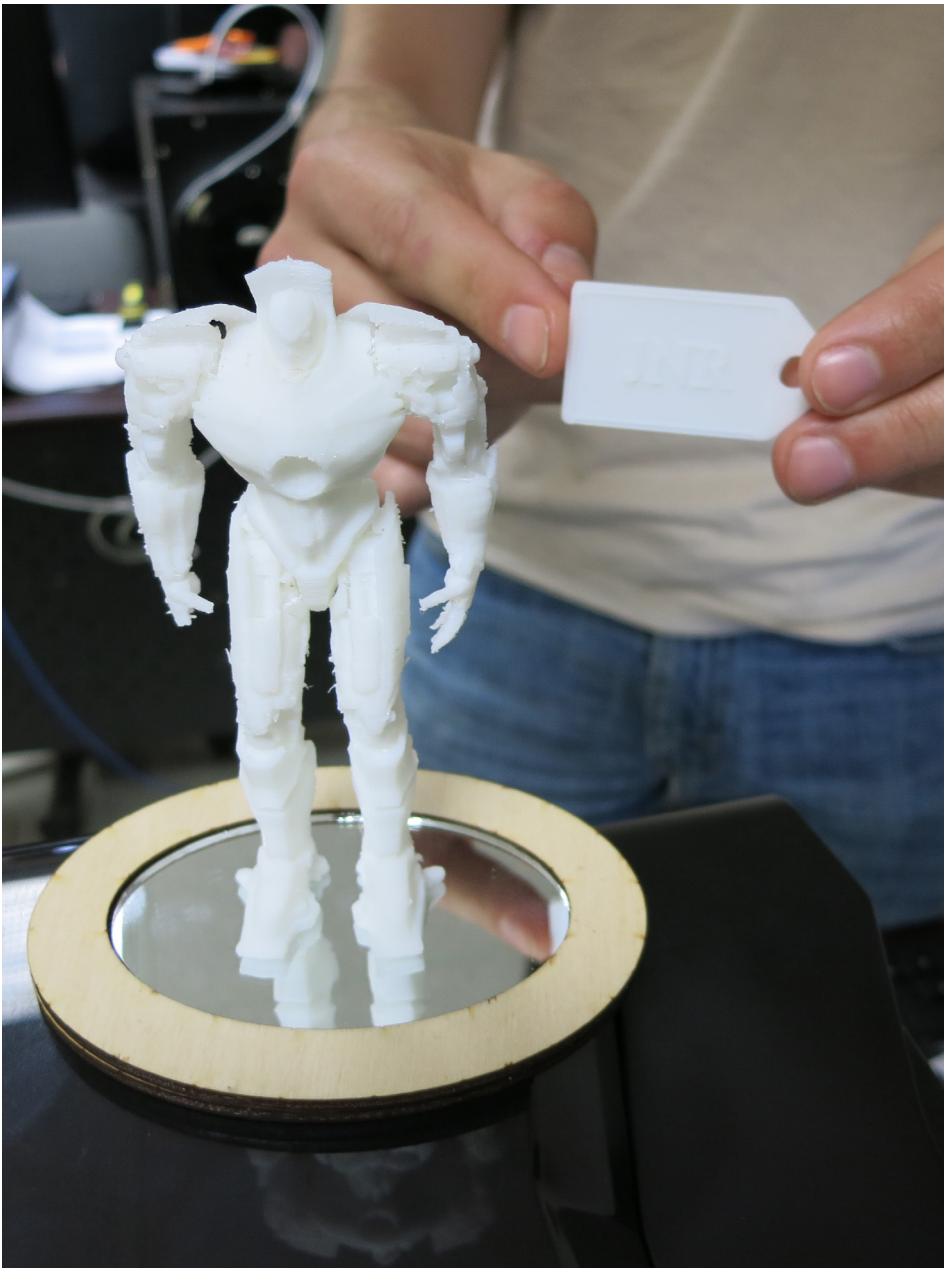
Operation of the fablab's computer numerical controlled mill (CNC) equipment in class.

Student proposed a traditional spearhead design used for hunting which normally takes hours to machine from brass by hand, and quickly discovers the empowerment of 3D printing to quickly replicate a traditional design with simplicity, accuracy and efficiency.

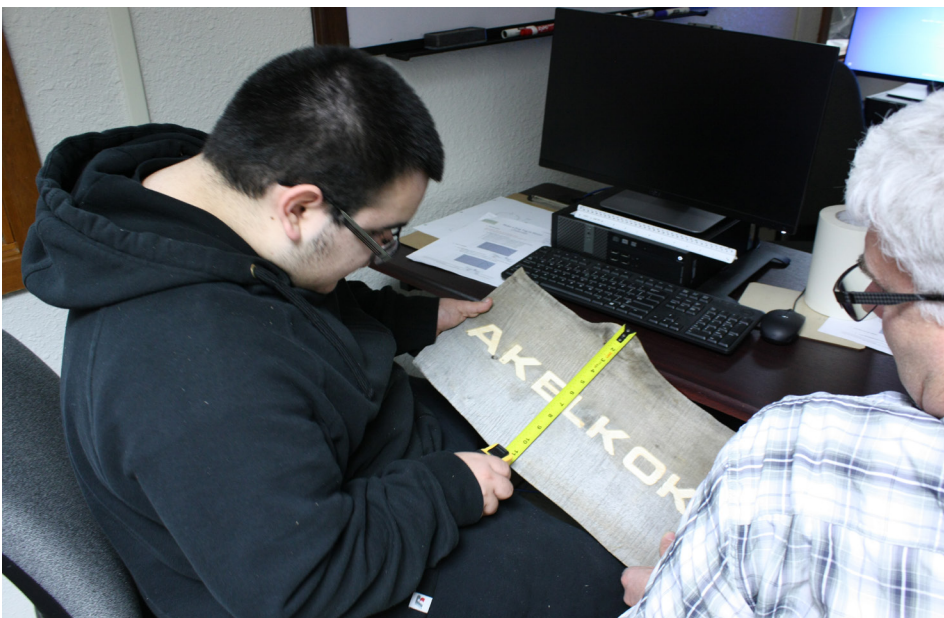


Detailed image of the printed spearhead design.





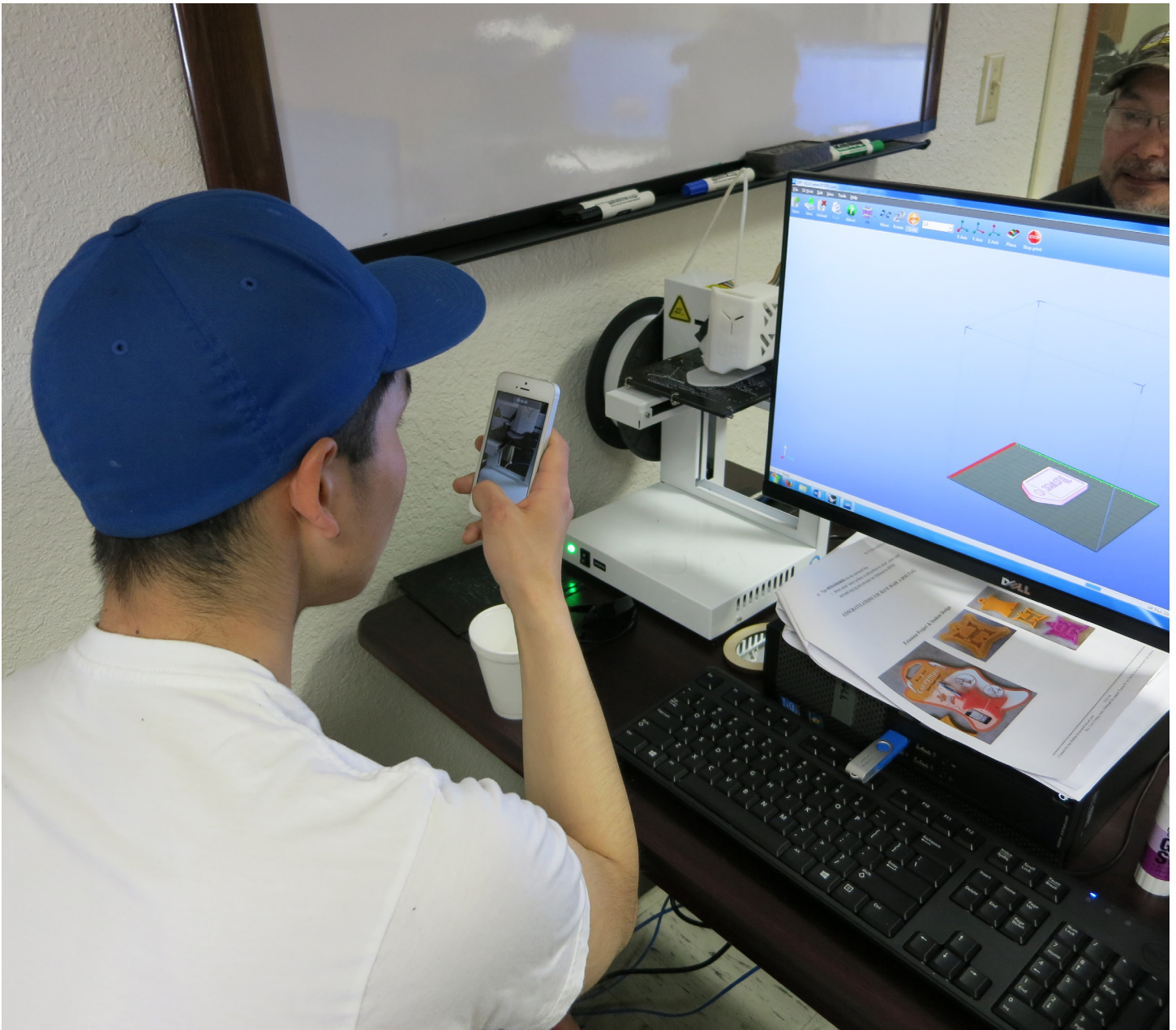
Completed products produced on both 3D printers, and laser engraving equipment by a local student.



Student works on a piece of reclaimed timber engraved using the laser engraver.

Local student presenting finished pieces utilizing cross disciplinary methods and processes to create physical art in the fablab.





Student from Toksook Bay prints his first project: a custom dogtag, on a desk-top 3D printer.

Students from Tooksok Bay, participating in an introductory Fablab course.

Their primary goals were to become familiarized with the equipment and their respective software to produce completed hard goods.

Yup'ik language samples

*aliurtuq - ghost, super natural presence

*Ciquyuq -



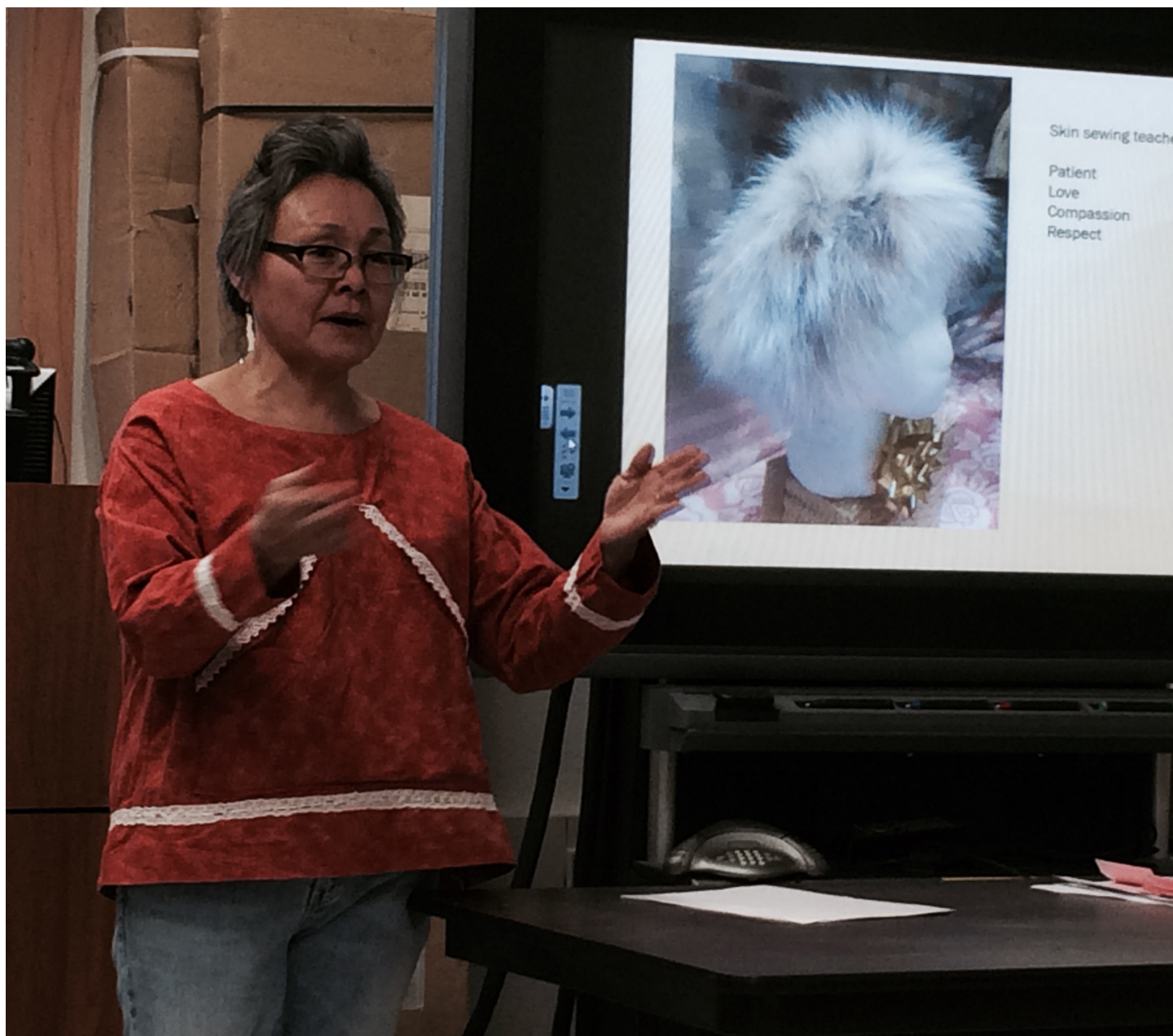
Women's Rural Values Conference

The Women's Rural Values Conference was held 11/21-23/2014 at the Bristol Bay campus. In keeping with the Bristol Bay Regional Vision Statement, the Women's conference addressed increased understanding of cultural values and traditions and spoke to ensuring that future generations are educated and empowered to carry on the traditions of the Yup'ik people. The three-day/evening women's conference was developed to enlist women/youth from the region to share in Yup'ik history, dance, language, art, food, health, self-care and storytelling. The elders were a huge part of the conference and their wisdom was greatly admired. Several Yup'ik scholars presented culturally relevant material and youth were enlisted to share their unique experiences. Break out sessions included, yoga, manicures, Yup'ik dance and Native art creations. Forty-seven women and youth attended the three-day event.

Words like supportive, great, empowering, encouraging, interesting and valuable were voiced again and again by the respondents. One woman shared, "I loved all of the activities. It was greatly empowering for me to do more for my community". Another woman commented, "I loved how empowering and healing the weekend was." The presence of elders and youth together, along with connections made with friends old and new were often cited by the participants as invaluable. When asked about expectations coming into the conference, the participants voiced excitement due to their expectations being far surpassed. "Much more than I expected", "Really inspiring," "More interesting than I thought it would be", were a few of the comments.



One class offered at the Women's Conference by Ms. Annie Fritze was Skin Sewing. Participants in this course reported the importance of learning skin sewing and passing this tradition on to their children and grandchildren. One woman commented, "Wonderful class to learn the meaning behind the art. Having respect for my own work and doing my best." Another participant wrote, "It has taught me the benefits of skin sewing and the spirituality of it." Most of the respondents stated their desire to teach the younger generation and to share with their community.





Subarctic Horticulture

Gardening Symposium/Sunday Afternoon Marketplace

The Gardening Symposium was held at the BBC from September 16th through the 18th. The topics included in the symposium were: wild and edible spring plants, soils, composting, warming the soils, seed starting and transplants. There were also sessions on fermenting and canning. Several presentations offered valuable information on healthy foods and easy preparation of healthy foods. In addition a Marketplace was open to the public on Sunday. Local arts, crafts and food items were available for purchase.

The Gardening Symposium had a total of 39 participants. Following is a list of the ethnicities of the attendees: Ten – Yu’pik, Five – Aleut, two - Inupiak, One – Alaskan Indian Athabaskan, One – Aleut and Yu’pik, Two – Yupik and Native Alaskan Other, One – Alaskan Native Southeast, Two- Asian, Two – Black, One – not specified, 13 – Caucasian. The participants came to the BBC from 14 regional villages. Ten participants came from the Dillingham Hospital Diabetes Clinic.

Dr. Jeff Smeenk offered knowledge on soil and how to enhance the soil in the Alaska climate. Dr. Smeenk’s sessions offered many opportunities for the attendees to ask questions and share information. Several participants raised concerns about the lack of a gardening curriculum in the village schools.

Several older participants reported that there was a FFS program in the schools and that the gardening knowledge they received as students was instrumental in their interest and success as adults. Another younger native woman reported she had an Indian Education class taught by elders that offered information of gardening, gathering and preparing native plants. She said that today there is no class in the schools offering this knowledge. In her home she and her husband are teaching their children native traditions, but she fears the many children are not learning these skills at home or in the schools.

One Native woman stated she would go back to her village council to share the information learned at the symposium and promote the idea of a community garden. She felt strongly that gardening “teaches kids to be productive’. Another participant shared that local foods and gardening are an important part of education and need to be taught

in the schools; “Kids need to learn about wild plants, composting and farming in the villages”. It was expressed that as the younger generation learns about the value of raising food, preparing food and learning the value of food that health and the local economy can be influenced. Many attendees voiced the need to pass on to youth the idea of ‘food as our identity’. The elders in the villages have immense knowledge about local plants and how to grow, gather, cook and heal with them. One woman suggested that youth in the villages interview elders about food and regional plants and gather information to be distributed throughout the region. This idea builds on the goals of the ANE grant, which aim to increase the sharing of valuable information between the elders and youth of the BB region.

Ms. Luz Smeenck presented on the nutritional value of micro plants and fermentation. Attendees participated in making a jar of fermented carrots to take home. Several participants offered information on the importance of root cellars. Many people reported that the root cellar was built before the house in order to assure that food be kept cold and dry. Sawdust has been used as an insulator for generations in the BB region.

Ms. Elaine Phillips has been both an instructor for and a participant in many of the ANE grant courses. She related that she has had the opportunity to return to many of the villages and has forged relationships with the young through her art classes. She shared a story of a young 11-year-old female who initially had an “attitude” but with time and patience was distracted by the art projects offered and has shown pride in her traditional art projects. These classes have given many village youth the chance to socialize and to learn traditional arts and crafts that may not have been passed on to them.



Above, Ms. Phillips works on a silk scarf design using native plants during a class on Eco-printing at the BBC.

The Gardening Marketplace which took place on Sunday, September 18th, brought local artists and cooks to the BBC to sell their goods. The Marketplace included traditional carvings, handmade fur items, jewelry and locally grown and canned foods. The Marketplace is an important component in that it enhances the Bristol Bay communities' knowledge of Native arts and crafts and allows for income generation for the artisans.



The Marketplace vendors setting up for the sale of their wares.

Several participants discussed the barriers that currently exist in teaching the regional youth the importance of gardening, composting and canning. In the traditional lifestyle of the Yu'pik people growing local plants, fishing and hunting have been central to their livelihood and survival. Many elders did not complete high school. Classes were offered in the schools on preserving and preparing food gathered and grown and on traditional ways to hunt and fish. With so much emphasis on survival and sustenance school was deemed less crucial. Today, the youth in the region have had their world expanded with technology and the ease of learning online. Fishing, hunting, berry picking and gardening often interfere with the time needed for youth to complete schooling.

How then can traditional Yu'pik culture and values continue to be embraced within the current technological environment? One parent said while she fears losing traditional Yu'pik culture she attempts to make time for both the old and the new in her home. She has a "phone free" time in which her children complete schoolwork. She and her husband also teach traditional cooking, crafts, hunting and fishing during the summer and on weekends. She offered that it is not easy but it is her priority as a mother to equip her children with tradition and technology.