



Culturally Relevant Schools Our Future Ancestors

Presented to the Alaska Department of Education
and Early Development (DEED) by



September 2023

Executive Summary

In August 2021, Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) accepted a partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to conduct an Alaska Native education model analysis. CITC is uniquely qualified for this work based on our radical new learning models, including digital badging, fab labs, culture camps, and innovation stations. The outcomes and stories collected from this work demonstrate that in partnership with Tribes and local education authorities, DEED can address the inequities of the current education system on Alaska Native students and families in a culturally relevant manner. By providing adequate resources to determine how greater Alaska Native organizational involvement can address the disparities in the academic achievement of our Alaska Native students. The stories and ideas shared through this project, titled Our Future Ancestors, are powerful, and executing any of the models can potentially transform educational opportunities for our Alaska Native students.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council

CITC is a Tribal nonprofit organization serving Alaska Native and American Indian people residing in the Cook Inlet region of southcentral Alaska. As one of the nation's preeminent culturally responsive social service organizations, CITC assists people to reach their often-untapped potential. CITC recognizes that when we work together, we can help each other develop our strengths and talents to become successful and self-sufficient individuals, families, and communities. Established in 1983, CITC serves more than 15,000 people annually through an array of integrated programs and employs more than 400 passionate and caring individuals. CITC programs include education and youth services, employment and training services, career development, family preservation, and support for individuals recovering from addiction, substance abuse, or incarceration.



In 2020, the CITC Board of Directors charged the organization to “Redefine education, based in culture and values, and co-designed with the community, with an openness to radical new learning models that leave four walls behind.” Forty years of commitment to learning and education have prepared CITC to move forward with its radical new learning models in 2020. CITC has learned that "education is not only a path to self-determination," but the path to self-determination. We understand that education is an essential component of ThriveAbility for Our People.

CITC's long-standing work to combine the benefits of traditional knowledge and innovation, create new career opportunities, and partner with national and local experts has led the organization to take on this Statewide project, demonstrating that there are ways to learn and grow outside conventional education pathways.

Experimental Design

CITC partnered with Experimental Design (Experimental), a narrative design studio that uses storytelling and design systems to build worlds that prototype the future and provoke change. In this unprecedented time of exponential transformation and massive disruption, Experimental enables its clients and partners to envision and experience a preferred future and take stable steps to make it a reality. Experimental's expertise in media, immersive storytelling, engineering, art, and science brought an essential worldbuilding methodology, along with researchers and experts, to CITC as it conducted an Alaska Native education model analysis—engaging its innovative co-creative process in doing the project. Experimental's world-building process generated the knowledge necessary to help CITC recommend to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) one or more grounded, culturally relevant alternative K-12 education models for Alaska Native and Native American students in Alaska. <https://experimental.design/work/our-future-ancestors>



Project Background

Alaska Native people's traditional values make them uniquely qualified to establish support for resiliency skills, emotional safety, community connectedness, and emotional regulation. Addressing the gaps in educational needs for Alaska Native and American Indian students is key to promoting self-sufficiency. Whether the model is tribal chartering or another model of culturally relevant education of public K-12 schools in Alaska is, without a doubt, an innovative approach in contrast to the current education model. Schools impart values to their students that shape the future of communities. Schools are also crucial for building the human capital necessary to advance the economic conditions in communities.

In Alaska, we value local control of education and educational choice. Culturally relevant schools would be instruments that fulfill these important roles while honoring the commitment to advance meaningful self-determination policy for Native students. Schools designed by local communities and Alaska Native people will be more culturally responsive, focusing on developing tribal citizens who can meet the future demands of the 21st century.

Cultural relevance for K-12 education is not a new idea to Alaska but an overdue one. It is an innovative idea discussed at the local level for years and was presented formally during Alaska's Education Challenge in 2017 by the Tribal & Community Ownership Committee and at the University and statewide Alaska Native conventions and meetings. The conviction that local communities are best situated to address the educational needs of their students is foundational to Alaska's system of education. Accordingly, if Tribes have greater ownership and local control over education, student outcomes in their communities will improve. As a result, all Alaskan students

and their communities will benefit from having access to this additional, innovative educational pathway.

What if Our learning systems reflected Our community and culture?

Tribal members, students, parents, teachers, administrators, and Elders from communities across Alaska had the opportunity to consider questions like this to collectively build a new world of education that describes a radically inclusive future of learning.

Project Deliverables

CITC leadership partnered with Tribal contacts in each of the 12 regions to plan and schedule community gatherings at the communities' convenience. The following is the general schedule used for respectfully engaging communities, sharing stories, and listening to Tribal members' needs and ideas:

Our Future Ancestors: Our Time Together

1
Day One
Community Gathering

Led by Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), the project team will arrive in the afternoon and if appropriate, would like to organize a welcome gathering or potluck for the community. It will be an opportunity to:

- Meet the team
- Ask any questions about *kalakas* and the days ahead
- Preview the web-app ourfutureancestors.com

Using storytelling as a tool, the community *kalaka*, or gathering around *joint voluntary work*, gathers ideas, stories and dreams of Our People across Alaska as a way to create new models of education for Our future youth.

Kalakas are an opportunity for community members to inspire each other by way of sharing stories and writing new ones together.

“
What if the school could smell like seal oil? It could smell like drying racks.
”
-Ukallaysaaq Okteasik, Nome

2
Day Two
Reimagining Education Kalaka

What if Our learning systems reflected Our community and culture?

10am Introductions, “Storytelling in Place”
Note: Ideally a part of this will occur outside on the land.

11am Participants engage in interactive activities to envision a world that we would like to move toward and develop.

1pm Lunch provided.

2pm Small groups continue building on earlier work to create more developed future visions of education through collective storytelling.

4pm Session concludes.

The *kalakas* will be co-facilitated by Aaron Leggett, President of the Native Village of Ekiutna (Dena’ina) and Karla Gatgyedm Hana’ax Booth (T’smsyen), unless otherwise specified.

Stories generated throughout the session will contribute to the interactive web-app: ourfutureancestors.com.

This project is a partnership between Cook Inlet Tribal Council and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

3
Day Three
Community Focus

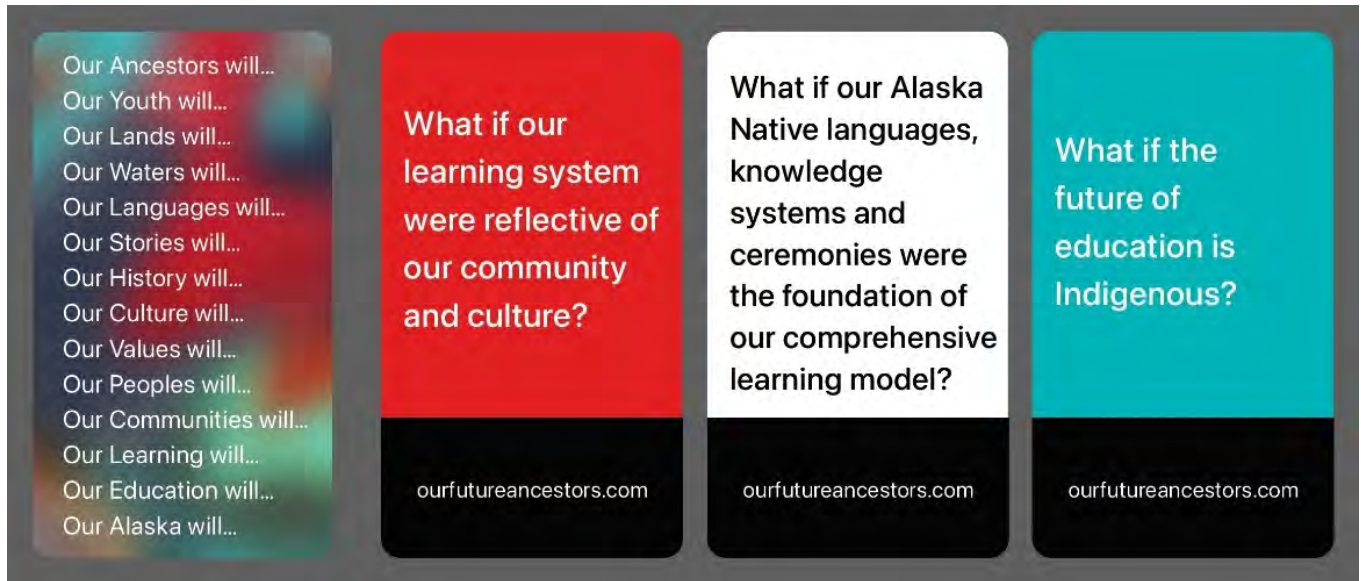
The project team will be available during the day to further apply and contextualize the envisioning of the prior day’s *kalaka* to a specific local initiative(s). Some examples of this are listed below.

- Condensed world building session with high school students
- Focused world building approach to a site and/or project that deepens the work from the previous day
- Visits to cultural spaces, Tribal projects and education initiatives that the community would like share and highlight for the rest of the State
- Meeting with Tribal leaders and members with CITC

“
I imagine learning happening anywhere and everywhere...it’s not just enclosed within a building, it’s throughout the community and the land.
”
-Peggy Azuyak, Kodiak

The project deliverables developed for Our Future Ancestors include the following:

- Introductory video—presented at the 2022 Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) conference: https://youtu.be/YO_viVEmUuw
- What If Cards and Facilitation decks



- Interactive education story collection: <https://ourfutureancestors.com/>
 - Through this website, users are invited to envision a desired future created together through the connection to Our Ancestors, Peoples, lands, and ways of life. By imagining and inhabiting this future, users are building a new vision for communities' youth and reimagining the past and present pathways to Our future.
 - New users are invited to document and share their stories and recommendations for culturally relevant education in Alaska. CITC's Tribal Partnerships Manager monitors and facilitates the addition of new stories.
 - The Community Responses section below includes links to the website presenting individual stories and ideas from the gatherings.
- Final project video—to be presented at the 2023 Alaska Federations of Natives (AFN) conference

Community Responses

Throughout this project, CITC held worldbuilding sessions in ten of the twelve Alaska regions. The final project outcomes are a series of models and a recommendation timeline informed by stories shared by Tribal community partners from CITC for DEED. The overarching themes shared across all visits include the following five categories: place-based learning, culture, history, wellbeing, and infrastructure.





Educational Themes

- Importance of learning on the land
- Revitalizing traditional ceremonies and rites of passage with youth
- Cultural pride and acknowledgment

Educational Opportunities & Models

- Educational models should reflect local stories and knowledge.
- Invest in education that teaches youth how to become future elders.
- Establish learning models that allow youth to learn their traditional languages first.
- Create systems where Native people introduce themselves in their traditional language.



Stories Shared

- Participation in Alaska Native cultural and language programming has a positive impact on youth and families from all backgrounds and geographies
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/3/then#238> (Tayler Higgins)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/10/then#237> (Diana Boggess)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/16/then#405> (Gatgyedm Hana'ax Karla Booth)

- Learn directly from community members and then learn by teaching others
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/15/then#23> (Peter Griggs)
- Incorporate rites of passage into the learning system
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/15/then#46> (Georgianna Starr)
- Acknowledge the trauma caused by the Western educational system
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#2> (Qanglaagix Ethan Petticrew)



Educational Themes

- Language revitalization
- Student-based education programming
- Local Alaska Native traditional values

Educational Opportunities & Models

- Integrate Dena'ina and other regional languages into education programming.
- Incorporate local place names in language programs.
- Use place-based land and subsistence practices to connect students to culture.
- Use the Traditional Values Wheel as a guiding practice in education.
- Focus education goals on the needs of each student, allowing students to learn at their own pace.
- Emphasize local Alaska Native history in the education curriculum.



Stories Shared

- Create environments where students can learn in their own way
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/11/then#242> (Clare Swan)
- Teach Alaska Native languages local to the region and incorporate local place names in language learning
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/15/then#61> (Aaron Leggett)
- Use traditional values to design education models helps heal and strengthen Communities

- <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/5/then#160> (Mary Ann Mills)
- <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/15/then#46> (Diana Zirul)
- Grant timelines and structures limit the actual learning needs of students/teachers/communities. Focus education on the needs of each student and reframe the learning structure on that instead of grant deadlines.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/15/then#52> (Joel Isaak)
- Allow other languages to affect how education is conducted
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/11/then#51> (Joel Isaak)
- Ensure local Alaska Native history is valued
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/17/then#54> (Jon Ross)
- Our People will Our names spoken
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/10/then#108> (Gloria O'Neill)

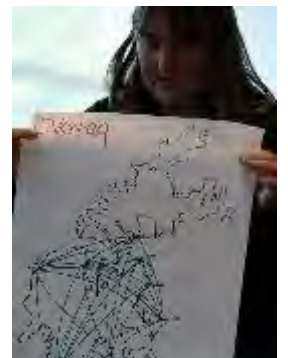


Educational Themes

- Local educators and administrators want to fully engage and include Indigenous methodologies and learning in their schools.
- There is anxiety related to the current *lack* of knowledge due to it not being taught growing up or in higher education.
- Resources (human and financial) must be dedicated in a sustained, meaningful way to ensure the inclusion of Alaska Native cultural knowledge and histories throughout all aspects of the education system, from local to state and federal leadership. The efforts to remove our knowledge were systemic – so must the reintegration.

Educational Opportunities & Models

- Finding ways for DEED, CITC and others invested in the perpetuation of Indigenous language to support efforts like the Suqpiat/Alutiiq immersion house is key
- Supporting the immersion preschool – how can it be supported to grow the school with the children through graduation and beyond?
- CITC can continue to advocate for increased funding for Indigenous-led projects and programs, invest in growing language teachers, and generally amplify the voices of our Tribal leaders on these issues with lawmakers and other decision-makers



Stories Shared

- Prepare and train teachers in immersive environments
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/4/then#71> (Linda Lorenson)
- Prepare out-of-state and out-of-region teachers before their arrival and train them in local culture once they arrive
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#77> (Julie Kaiser)

- Incorporate local traditional values into the learning environment
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/map?id=1#8/57.795/-152.395> (Natalia Schneider)
- Create a holistic learning environment by structuring learning around cultural values and lifeways
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/1/then#217> (Qangyungcuk Natalia Schneider)
- Include the presence of Elders in the classroom
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/14/then#76> (Julie Kaiser)
- Address difficult topics and mental health
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/3/then#238> (Arwen Botz)
- Involve families and the community to address trauma and suicide ideation to promote healing and the learning environment as safe and welcoming
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/1/then#212> (Stacie Arnold)
- Learn on the land and outside of the classroom
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/19/then#264> (Amy Peterson)
- Immerse students in their Native languages
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/6/then#91> (Shak'shaani Éesh Konrad Frank)



Educational Themes

- Language and Culture is the foundation of the education system.
- Educators need to understand the community they teach to understand where our children come from. There is an assumption that everyone comes from a similar background (Western or Native), so they start from there.
- Elders will be a part of the education system.
- The classrooms and schools should feel like home.
- Educators will come from the community.
- Students as teachers, there is much that can be learned between formal and traditional education.

Educational Opportunities & Models

- The education system should model how our students learn in real life.
- The education system creates multiple pathways to success to teach the whole person, i.e. vocational training, college, etc.,
- The system should be holistic and not siloed.
- Alaska Native History curriculum should be taught to all students and specific to the region so everyone understands where they come from.



Stories Shared

- Everyone should be taught histories of the land they are on from Alaska Native perspectives
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/3/then#137> (Barb Amarok)

- Success is educating the whole human being
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/16/then#103> (Hattie Keller)
- Provide opportunities from multiple ages to learn and interact with each other
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/14/then#136> (Darlene Trigg)
- Learning from the act of community members taking care of one another
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/4/then#115> (Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle)
- Rather than isolate, bring students facing challenges closer into activities like NYO
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/10/then#108> (Caitlin Auk Tozier)
- Qasgi (men's house/cultural house) as a place for learning
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/17/then#98> (Warren Jones)



The team was honored to visit Juneau for the Sealaska Heritage Foundation’s Culturally Responsive Education Conference in August 2022. The theme of the conference was *Haa K̄usteeyí Yatsáakw: Our Way of Life Persists*.

This annual conference serves as in-service training for Juneau School District staff along with hosting participants from Alaska, the Lower 48 and as far away as Australia. The goal of the conference is to provide a deep understanding of culturally responsive, place-based education and to equip educators, school administrators, university and community educators with the skills needed to reach all students, especially those who have been historically underserved, disenfranchised and marginalized.

The conference featured two keynote speakers, 60 breakout sessions and 9 immersive learning workshops to 550 in person attendees as well as 100 attendees online. Breakout sessions included topics such as: Literacy - Languages & Oral Stories - Mental & Physical Well Being - Intergenerational Learning & Sharing - To Promote Academic Success of Native students. Saturday classes included:

Being in Place - Why do we live here?

Participants investigated—with guidance from elders, cultural specialists, scientists and naturalists—the potential factors for choosing winter village sites and summer resource camps.



Community History - Intergenerational Learning in “Old” Juneau

Community is at the core of culturally responsive teaching. Beyond the classroom, culturally responsive educators need to engage with the local community to learn the history and cultures of the students and families. This session was designed to give participants an opportunity to actively participate in an intergenerational learning environment. Participants learned tips on how to respectfully engage with community members through examples of lessons implemented in classroom settings. Indigenous community members and families that were raised in “Old” Juneau will then share their knowledge of the history of the local neighborhoods and their experiences with education, statehood, civil rights, and ANCSA.

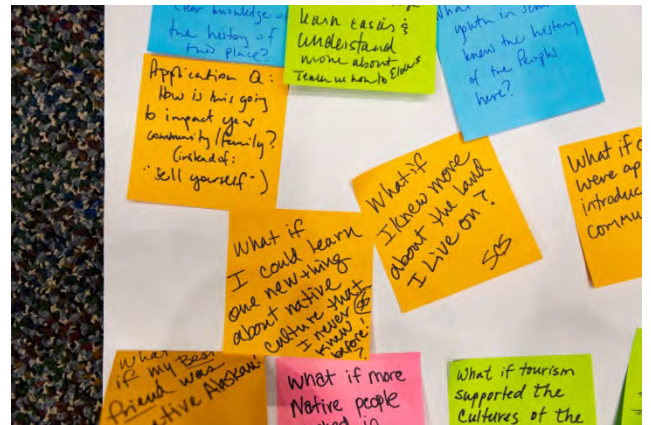
Stories Shared

- Our communities will grow our own teachers.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#357> (Gatgyedm Hana'ax Karla Booth)
- Our Peoples will learn from one another.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/4/then#410> (Gatgyedm Hana'ax Karla Booth)



The team facilitated a multi-generational session at the 2022 Elders & Youth Conference at the Dena'ina Center, sponsored by First Alaskans Institute. Session attendees were from all regions across the state, deepening the conversation around statewide education transformation for Alaska Native students. At this session, attendees had the opportunity to share education needs and ideas from their respective regions and Tribes using the *What If* card deck, and then attendees at each table drew their ideal future educational world using the concept of what they want their future ancestors to experience.

The outcomes of this broad discussion were compelling and demonstrated commonalities across Tribes and rural communities seeking more authority to experience education rich in culture, Alaska Native languages, and equity.



Stories Shared

- Our People will heal future generations.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/5/then#110> (Taylor Higgins)
- Our Alaska will understand that we are not monolithic.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/4/then#246> (Mona Evan)
- Our youth will be empowered to do anything.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#49> (Val Davidson)
- Participation in Alaska Native cultural and language programming has a positive impact on youth and families from all backgrounds and geographies.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/3/then#238> (Tayler Higgins)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/10/then#237> (Diana Boggess)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/16/then#405> (Gatgyedm Hana'ax Karla Booth)

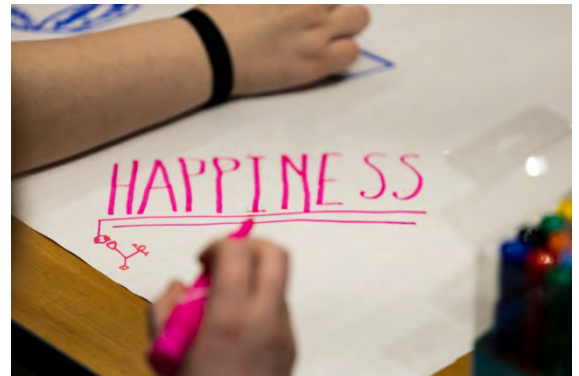


Educational Themes

- There is so much Tribal pride in this amazing group of Alaska Native individuals, regardless of their Federal Tribal status. The Tribe is very connected to its members and their needs.
- The range of Native cultures contributes to greater respect for where everyone originated.
- Programs like AVTEC demonstrate that there are education gaps all across the state for Alaska Native students and young adults, and programs like this close that gap.

Educational Opportunities & Models

- Increased involvement and support of youth (and Elders) from the Tribe, including NYO and Elder activity support.
- Federal Tribal status is something they have been working on for decades. It hinders their ability to receive Federal Tribal funding but does not impact their Tribal pride.
- Qutekcak has a deep respect and partnerships with the other Tribes in the Chugachmuit and Cook Inlet Regions. There is a good example of how to reconsider how we work and advocate for our youth together.



Stories Shared

- Multi-generational learning environments are important and allow kids to learn differently and remain engaged
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/14/then#352> (Carol Conant)

- Prioritize homegrown and local teachers and provide out-of-state teachers with local training
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#357> (Jen Paninagar Kiokun)
- Teachers learn about local traditions and ways of life once they arrive and are provided ongoing teacher training to deepen local knowledge
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#395> (Jen Paninagar Kiokun)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#388> (Carol Conant)
- Teach traditional values and Alaska Native history and Incorporate learning outside and on the land
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/18/then#265> (Laura Perri)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/11/then#355> (Jen Paninagar Kiokun)
- Learn the difficult aspects of Alaska Native and Western history in order to create empathy and cultural awareness
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/3/then#259> (Jen Paninagar Kiokun)
- Make language learning free and accessible
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/6/then#396> (Jen Paninagar Kiokun)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/1/then#173> (Francis Jimmie, AVTEC)

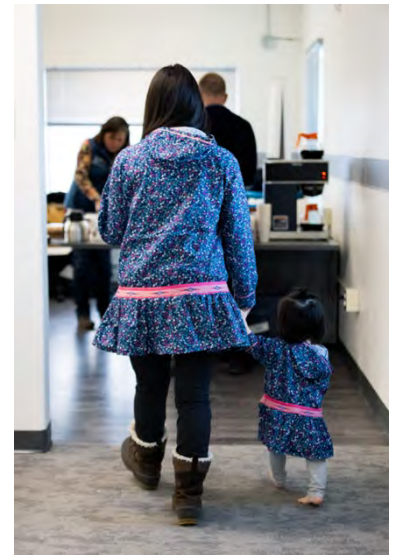


Educational Themes

- Educators and Administrators should be a part of the community.
- The educational system should reflect the community calendar.
- The Inupiat language must be an essential part of the educational system.
- Education must include the elders.
- The community is the classroom.

Educational Opportunities & Models

- The Inupiaq culture is integrated into the educational system by fully implementing the Inupiaq Learning Framework.
- Education needs to include the history of the communities.
- Augment the curriculum with elders teaching alongside teachers and pay them. Lived experience will count towards qualifications.



Stories Shared

- Our communities will be included in education.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/map?id=23#8/71.289/-156.792> (Tenna Judkins)
- Our cultures will be included in all subjects.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/map?id=23#8/71.289/-156.792> (Jerica Leavitt)
- Our education will include our elders.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/map?id=23#8/71.289/-156.792> (Jacqui Lambert)
- Our communities will have schedules that support Our culture.

- <https://ourfutureancestors.com/map?id=23#8/71.289/-156.792> (Tommilynn Ahmaogak)
- Our communities will heal.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/14/then#256> (Olivia Leavitt)



Educational Themes

- Fostering cultural knowledge and values
- Promote traditional subsistence activities
- Wellbeing of youth and the community
- Community involvement

Educational Opportunities & Models

- Share Ahtna cultural knowledge, values, history, language, and traditions to younger generations by incorporating culture in schools through language immersion programs, cultural camps, community participation, and training local teachers in Ahtna culture.
- Teach youth traditional subsistence skills such as hunting, fishing, gathering, preserving and preparing traditional foods in school. This could include school gardens, harvesting time off, and normalizing traditional foods.
- Fostering health and well-being of youth by promoting cultural identity, traditional foods and activities, avoiding substance addiction, incorporating care practices based on Ahtna values, and promoting physical fitness.
- Encouraging youth participation and leadership in cultural and community activities. This could include granting youth credit for cultural participation and utilizing Elders as teachers in the classroom.



Recommendations that CITC Heard

- Leverage digital tools and games to promote Alaska Native history, language immersion and to preserve local stories, histories and values.
- Address the trauma and history of boarding schools with today's students statewide.
- Multigenerational learning with youth at the center and elders encircling them.

There was a lot of conversation around how the Western diet harms Alaska Native people, really all people who follow it. Emphasis on traditional foods being a part of the school culture. Also, this group spoke a great deal about past trauma and the need for healing in culturally relevant ways.

Stories Shared

- Our youth will learn on the land.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/4/then#71> (Robin Mayo)
- Our Alaska will end prejudice.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/4/then#478> (Josh Franks)
- Our Peoples will find power in learning Our languages.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/6/then#560> (Ashley Hicks)
- Our youth will know who they are.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/16/then#552> (Lacayah Engebretson)
- Our lands and waters will be a part of Our identity and learning.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/19/then#472> (Robin Mayo)



Educational Themes

- Cultural identity and language -
- Community connections -
- Holistic learning -
- Individualized learning -

Educational Opportunities & Models

- Fostering cultural identity and revitalizing indigenous languages through immersive language programs, culturally-relevant assessments, signage, and place names.
- Building community connections through collaborative relationships between families-schools, cultural events, Elder participation, and communication between indigenous leaders.
- Supporting holistic learning through land-based education, traditional ecological knowledge, food security, and defining success broadly.
- Enabling individualized, self-paced learning where students can explore topics of interest and learn in ways suited to them. Smaller student-teacher ratios support this.



Stories Shared

What if we could all speak, think and dream in Our own languages?

- Our Peoples will introduce themselves in Our Native languages.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/6/then#535> (Alan Hayton)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/6/then#539> (Brianna Gray)

What if Our Alaska Native languages, knowledge systems and ceremonies were the foundation of a comprehensive learning model?

- Our youth will learn their Native language first
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/11/then#289> (Lucy Miller)
- Our education will be run by our Tribes
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/11/then#505> (Dewey Hoffman)
- Our education will measure us by our own standards
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/11/then#421> (Luke Meinert)

What if Our learning reaffirmed Our connection to the land and water?

- Our lands and waters will be called by their original names.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/19/then#42> (Brianna Gray)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/19/then#457> (Sonni Shavings)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/19/then#457> (Robin Masterman & Sonni Shavings)

What if Our community values were reflected in Our teachers and administrators?

- Our education will respect Indigenous language teachers
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#575> (Dewey Hoffman)
- Our Alaska will invest in immersion teacher training
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/2/then#453> (Karla Booth)
- Our youth will be respected for who they are.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/10/then#526> (Brianna Pulling)



Educational Themes

- Promoting cultural knowledge and identity through language, values and history
- Community connections between educators and tribal members
- Wellbeing of the community
- Offer practical life skills for students

Educational Opportunities – Models - Where can we be of assistance?

- Increase cultural knowledge through language learning, storytelling, traditional skills (sewing, building steam baths), harvesting/subsistence activities, and aligning school values with community historical values. Align school calendars to support this learning.
- Foster strong community connections by educating about local cultures, creating a culture of respect, improving attendance and graduation rates, sharing food, and knowing community members.
- Support holistic health through harvesting activities, traditional food sharing, improving mental health, and defining success more broadly than just academics.
- Teach practical skills like emergency preparedness, sewing, building, harvesting knowledge, and using new industries/technologies to support the community.



Stories Shared

What if every child for culturally grounded and felt affirmed in their learning environment?

- I would say it would create a sense of security for kids, having a safe place to go to. Being able to not be bullied, not have to go through trauma in a place that should be keeping them safe. This is kind of a question we've asked ourselves at school too as part of our school culture and climate survey actually is, do people feel safe. And, what does that look like. - *Robin Chaney*
- I'm going to come from a teacher's perspective. I really think we need to do a better job of teaching our school culture and climate to new teachers and people that come in, whether it's admin or whatever and not the other way around. What happens so often is the admin comes in and forces their culture on our school. – *John Mantooth*
- I think I love the focus on teachers of course they're the most important part of educating them because they are directly in front of our kids, but also taking new administrators and they need a cultural mentor. They need to get out. – *Megan McKinley*
- So I think one of the things that in terms of learning the culture is teachers need to understand that in [01:44:00] indigenous communities, when you ask the question in the western world, it's one second, two second. In indigenous populations, just like now we asked him a question, there's a long pause for answers. - *Annie Fritzie*

What if schools were a place where Alaska Native youth and families felt safe and welcome?

- I felt safe and welcome maybe because we were always participating in our kids' activities. So I think how we talk about teachers need to have in service with teachers, I think parent teacher orientation needs to happen. - *Annie Fritzie*
- So was the bullying... The way I see it there's multiple levels of bullying. Teachers can bully students. Okay. Obviously. They can't speak your language and all that. So there's again, it can be institutional bullying or it can be bullying, student on student bullying type of thing. And not as regulated or solved. Can you elaborate, which was it a combination of both? – *Sean???*
- I was trying to think of why, what I felt safe about at school or when I felt safe at school. And I think it was because I was connected with my teachers. They knew who I was. They knew me and counselors like [inaudible 02:00:46]. Oh my god, I was going to say, I heard you say classmates. And I was like, yes. – *Robyn Chaney*



Educational Themes

- Promoting cultural identity
- Fostering community connections
- Place-based and land education
- Holistic development

Educational Opportunities – Models - Where can we be of assistance?

- Passing down knowledge of language, cultural values, traditions, stories, songs, dances, traditional foods, and spirituality to strengthen cultural identity, especially for youth.
- Gathering across generations, developing reciprocity, welcoming outsiders, and sharing stories and meals to build relationships and connections.
- Basing learning on local ecology, seasons, geography, and subsistence activities to connect students to place.
- Supporting self-exploration, cultural exploration, identity development, and youth leadership to nurture the whole child. Moving from planning to action.



Summary

The CITC team met with members of the Unalaska Aleut Unangan Region community who gathered to discuss culturally relevant education. The sessions were virtual due to the widespread geographical area of the Aleut Unangan people. Additionally, several youth leaders participated in these sessions.

Working as a collaborative community, not as disconnected individuals, their vision would transform education to be more culturally enriching. Important cultural values like humor, respect and inclusiveness were identified during the sessions.

- Ideas emerged to make learning reflect the community's seasons, land and local knowledge. Everyone's knowledge would be valued, from youth to elders. Local teachers and leaders would need to be part of this process. "Come together as communities and respect everyone and everything." – *Johnney Fratis*

Sharing circles would provide safe spaces for stories. Traditional foods, languages, stories and cultural practices would be incorporated throughout schools and the communities, instead of standardized testing. Required assessments could be based on cultural values rather than impersonal tests. "Being graded can be degrading and limiting to our potential." – *Anfesia Tutiakoff*

Much of our time focused on redesigning education from an indigenous perspective to better serve the cultural values and needs of each community. The group agreed it was time to put their ideas into action. They hoped to integrate their community's values into everyday learning.

Summary of Education Models

- Multi-generational Learning: Fostering connections between youth and Elders through intergenerational learning, cultural participation, and classroom involvement of Elders

- This could include passing down cultural knowledge, values, traditions, skills, stories, songs, dances, foods to youth to strengthen cultural identity.



- <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/14/then#136> (Darlene Trigg)
- Language & Culture: Revitalizing indigenous languages through immersive language programs and incorporating local languages into schools.
 - In 2016 Doyon Foundation was awarded an ANA grant and then in 2017, a DEED grant for creating online courses focused on each language for the region. Doyon has developed courses for the nine Athabascan languages and is working on the tenth language of Inupiaq as they build this online platform. This platform could be modeled for each region and utilized in local schools in each region.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/1/then#95> (Max Pyles)
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/15/then#68> (Lynda Lorenson)
- Tribal Connections: Our education system doesn't exist in isolation. We must forge stronger relationships between teachers, administrators, Tribal leaders, culture-bearers and members throughout our communities. We must align our education goals and deepen the bonds that unite us in our shared efforts to prepare the next generation for a thriving future.
- Heal from Trauma: Despite the pain, the Alaska public K12 education system must not shy away from Our past.
 - Through partnerships with Alaska Native people, organizations and entities, DEED will acknowledge and support the teaching of past educational policies and decisions that have impacted generations of Alaska Native people. DEED must honor the stories of the past and refuse to repeat it by requiring not only Alaska History, but Alaska Native History as a basis for high school graduation.
 - Our communities will break the cycle of abuse.

- <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/1/then#454> (Teresa Trinidad)
- Our communities will heal.
 - <https://ourfutureancestors.com/whatif/14/then#524> (Allan Hayton)
- Tribal Charter Schools
 - Through the regulatory and legislative process, provide for local school districts to allow Alaska Native organizations as authorizers for tribal charter schools. In concert with the current Tribal Compacting Pilot Program and based on community stories, this could greatly impact the cultural relevancy of public education in Alaska.
- Land-based education that connects learning to local ecology, seasons, geography, subsistence activities, and place.
 - Setting school calendars around subsistence and hunting activities, encouraging school districts to include land-based activities outdoors based on seasons, include elders for teaching students as well as teachers and administrators.

CITC Recommendations for DEED

Short-Term (1 – 3 years)

- Include Alaska Native history and culture in all State curriculum.
- Through the regulatory process, revise Alaska History requirements to include Alaska Native history in a manner that will guide updated and relevant curriculum for school districts across the state.
- Work with postsecondary institutions to develop a required, comprehensive, culturally relevant course of study for educators new to Alaska to complete within 12 months of being hired by a school district. Include a relevant course in Alaska Native Studies and/or History.
- Promulgate a revision to regulations that allows local communities and local education authorities to set school calendars to meet the need for hunting and fishing during the school year.



Long-Term Investments (3 – 5 years)

- Create opportunities for communities and Tribes to include traditional language and language preservation in their schools.
- Create opportunities with postsecondary institutes to recruit and train prospective Alaska Native educators through work with communities and school districts.
- Create pathways that allow for elders and other non-certified Alaska Native community members to be paid to teach Alaska Native languages and culture.