

Youth Forum

Youth Forum Briefing

CONTACT

Shelley Wesser, Shared Beringian Heritage Program Outreach and Youth Coordinator, National Park Service, Anchorage, Alaska; phone: (907) 644-3492; email: shelley_wesser@nps.gov

Eight young leaders, nominated by their village IRAs (from the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act) and sponsored by the Beringia Program, came from the communities of Gambell, Savoonga, Wales, Shishmaref, Unalakleet, Koyuk, Kiana and Kivalina to attend the inaugural Youth Forum in Nome. Twenty students also attended the forum from Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC) in Nome, two students from West High School in Anchorage and several young leaders from Kotzebue. Youth from Chukotka, Russia, from the village of New Chaplino and members of the Native dance group “Solnyshko,” participated in the meeting with the help of a translator.

The group came together to create and develop potential projects that met the goals and objectives of the Beringia Program. The Shared Beringian Heritage Program and the National Park Service are committed to involving youth in the planning and implementation of programs and projects. The inclusion of young people is a nationwide priority goal of the National Park Service, and Alaska national parks dedicate efforts to advancing this initiative through youth participation and outreach.

To recognize the importance of the inaugural Youth Forum in targeting young Alaskans, National Park Service Deputy Director Peggy O’Dell and Alaska Regional Director Sue Masica gave opening remarks and spoke to the group about the significance of their participation.

During the brainstorming sessions that followed, the youth divided into four groups focusing on specific subject areas. These included Archaeology, Cultural Preservation, Climate Change and Subsistence. Youth collaborated with expert “mentors” and came up with ideas for future Beringia projects involving and directed by young people. The recommendations included several ideas for new Beringia projects that could receive funding by the Shared Beringian Heritage Program or other sponsors of such programs.

The Cultural Preservation group proposed maintaining and sustaining the Siberian Yupik language via a shared curriculum based on Native dances, sports, handicrafts and art common to indigenous people in Alaska and Chukotka. The Climate Change group suggested that students document changes to subsistence hunting calendars in Beringian villages because of climate change and post these results to a special website. The Archaeology group wanted to conduct archaeology workshops for students, scientists and residents of Beringian communities to simultaneously learn from each other and improve relationships between these groups. The Subsistence group recommended the development and distribution of an educational booklet and DVD on subsistence activities for school courses in rural areas, statewide and even nationally through social media and real-time learning.

The youth then presented the to the main conference audience during a special closing session. The National Park Service and the Shared Beringian Heritage Program are working to develop further these project ideas and to create partnerships with other organizations to fund and support these youth projects. The Youth Forum attendees have committed to working on these project ideas and making their proposals a reality.

Youth Forum

Youth Forum Proposals

Learning and Teaching Siberian Yupik Language and Customs through Shared Traditional Activities in Alaska and Chukotka

CONTRIBUTORS

- **Tiffany Immingan**, Savoonga, Alaska
- **Andrey Makotrik**, New Chaplino, Chukotka
- **Egor Akhsakhtikak**, New Chaplino, Chukotka
- **Victoria Anaka**, Anadyr', Chukotka
- **Anna Agnagisyak**, New Chaplino, Chukotka

This project's title is "Angyaghpak" in Siberian Yupik, "Kovcheg" in Russian and "The Ark" in English. This name symbolizes the main goal of the proposed project, which is to simultaneously learn, teach and protect the Siberian Yupik language through various ethnic activities like dancing, handicrafts and Arctic sports. In reference to the biblical Ark of Noah, the project aims to gather and preserve Siberian Yupik cultural elements and pass them to the future generations of Native people, especially youth, on Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska, and the Chukchi Peninsula, Chukotka. During the inaugural Youth Forum at Beringia Days 2011 in Nome, Alaska, youth from the Beringia region in both countries met and developed a set of project recommendations to make this proposal a reality.

The traditions are part of the shared cultural heritage of the Siberian Yupik people who inhabit the coastal communities of the Bering Strait in America and Russia and represent the common "language" that they speak. The Siberian Yupik people from both sides are one ethnic group who shares the same languages and traditions. They have family ties that connect them on a deep and meaningful level. They are literally "one family" and therefore should work together to preserve and teach these traditions for future generations. The historical and political divisions that separated Yupik people in America and Russia could not suppress these ancient customs, and they continue to provide a cultural "bridge" between the indigenous people in both countries. In the face of technology and rapid developments, however, the traditions that sustain

this bridge are in danger of extinction. Both groups of youth recognize the inherent threat to their customs and are dedicated to maintaining its continuity through dancing, singing, doing handicrafts and participating in Arctic sports.

The main components of the "Angyaghpak" project, as suggested by the participants, are:

- Using cultural exchanges and meetings to record and pass on the shared heritage of their ancestors through participation in Native activities like dance, song, handicrafts and sports.
- Participants in this project will write down all the songs that accompany dances in Siberian Yupik and translate them into English and Russian. The words will be written phonetically so they can be pronounced, understood and repeated by everyone. Both sides will work on recording these songs and dances on voice recorders and HD (high definition) video, with the ultimate goal of teaching Siberian Yupik to fellow indigenous youth through active participation. They will use the same process to record participation in the other activities.
- The songs, dances, crafts and sports will be photographed, step-by-step and word-by-word, with the product being an instructional video or picture series that will simultaneously record and preserve the activities and will help others to understand Siberian Yupik words through active participation in dance, song, handicrafts and sports.
- A further goal will be to have exchanges of young teachers of Siberian Yupik who will dance, do handicrafts and practice Arctic sports with their students as a means of teaching the language. The young people and teachers involved will participate in exchanges with the understanding that at their meetings, they will speak only Siberian Yupik. There will be no Russian or English involved — the main purpose will be to create the necessary medium for language learning. Regardless of skill or fluency, Siberian Yupik

Youth Forum

will be the only language spoken. To communicate, the young people will have to search out and learn words they may not have known. The people from the local community can also be involved in the process of immersing students and teachers in the language and will be invited to participate in the process of recording Yupik activities

- The youth and community participants involved in the project will designate young teachers who will develop and implement a curriculum that can be taught in both Alaska and Chukotka. This curriculum will be developed and standardized so that even beginners in the communities can learn the language and traditions of their ancestors. The teachers could involve or consult with a specialist in language curriculum development to help them with the design of the Siberian Yupik curriculum.
- The outcome of this project, “Angyaghpak,” and further curriculum will be a common knowledge of the same words, dances, songs, crafts and sports in Siberian Yupik communities in Alaska and Chukotka. This shared knowledge, where both sides know the same things in the same language, will be demonstrated by performances at Native dance festivals around the region – “Ergav” in Chukotka and “Kivgiq” in Alaska. Youth who participate and learn through this curriculum will have the opportunity to attend these meetings and festivals, where they will represent one cultural and ethnic group. They will perform the same dances and songs in the same language as one crew, “Angyaghpak.” While they may come to the festivals and meetings from different villages in different countries, they will unite as one group who sing and dance a common language, Siberian Yupik. They will also participate in the Beringia Days Conference, providing a living example of collaboration and cooperation in the region.

The budget for this project will include funding for exchanges, back and forth once each funding year, where youth and the designated teachers and recorders will travel to Siberian Yupik-speaking villages in Alaska and Chukotka. Other funding will provide salary or contract money for a consultant and teachers to accompany the youth on the exchanges and develop a curriculum around Siberian Yupik traditional activities that the youth engage in. Funding will also be provided for equipment needed to record performances or participation in shared activities during and after the exchanges so that material can continue to be added to the curriculum. Farther down the line, the project would fund travel for youth both from Alaska and Russia to travel and meet at Native dance festivals across the Beringia region. Funding for costumes and other materials will be provided, so when the youth perform as one group, they look like one group. We will develop a logo and promotional materials for “Angyaghpak” for distribution, so that the project is well known and recognizable in local communities. After the curriculum is developed, funding for publication, dissemination and implementation will be provided. The shared activities will become part of the modern-day education of Siberian Yupik youth in both Alaska and Chukotka, thereby saving, preserving and passing on the customs of their ancestors.

Youth Forum

Effects of Climate Change on Hunting Calendars

CONTRIBUTORS

- **Marjorie Koonooka**, Gambell, Alaska
- **Molly Mazonna**, Wales, Alaska
- **Noah Warnock**, Anchorage, Alaska
- **Mariah Savoie**, Anchorage, Alaska
- **Rita Ramoth**, Kivalina, Alaska

This project idea would reflect and demonstrate the real effects of climate change and the personal experiences of youth in Beringia communities. This proposal and idea focuses on how climate change has affected rural communities who rely on a subsistence lifestyle to survive and thrive. Climate change is evident on a personal level and on a community level. People from different communities, backgrounds, lifestyles, cultures and traditions recognize and share the detrimental effects of a warming climate. This project aims to advance knowledge, communication and safety for subsistence hunters who personally experience the effects of climate change in the region, both in Alaska and Russia.

Climate change is not an abstract concept, but a real and noticeable process. It affects ice sheets, hunting grounds, animal habitats and hunting schedules. It is evident in Native Alaska and Chukotka villages that seasonal weather changes, such as ice sheets not freezing early enough into hunting season, are having a serious impact on the annual hunting calendars. The members of the Climate Change Youth Forum group at the 2011 Beringia Days Conference were fascinated with weather patterns attributable to climate change. They proposed documenting these changes in Alaska and Chukotka villages, collecting evidence of changing weather and geology and studying the effects of shifts in hunting calendars on other areas of village life. New and unknown occurrences that change the subsistence-hunting schedule modify and alter multiple things

in the villages. There are safety concerns as the weather and the landscape become unpredictable and therefore untested. Early or late hunting seasons have cultural implications since a subsistence lifestyle relies on the resources of the land and sea.

This project would be called “Effects of Climate Change on Hunting Calendars” and would document the changes to hunting schedules by traveling to Chukotka and Alaska coastal villages and conducting interviews with hunters and elders on hunting/fishing calendars to track the effects of climate change on migrations and patterns of local animals relied on for subsistence. The participants would talk to hunters of all age groups in various communities and gather information on how climate change has affected each hunting calendar for each subsistence animal (walrus, seals, caribou, birds and so on.)

The main goal of this project would be to track these changes over the course of three years and provide tangible and comprehensive evidence to relevant agencies that regulate subsistence hunting. The project, depending on the evidence, would recommend to those agencies that they make the hunting window longer. Changes to the hunting schedule could accommodate rural communities that are being impacted by climate change.

As a deliverable product, the project participants would produce an interactive website updated each year with changes to the annual Native community hunting calendars. They would include video clips of their interviews with hunters and elders from the communities as well as a virtual display of the hunting calendar. This website could be a way for Chukotka and Alaska hunters to provide regulatory agencies with evidence that hunting calendars are changing because of climate change and therefore accommodations should be made to increase the allowed subsistence hunting timeframes.

Youth Forum

Health, Safety and Awareness through Subsistence Traditions and Values

CONTRIBUTORS

- **Jacob Martin**, Nome, Alaska
- **Henry Adams**, Koyuk, Alaska

This project would educate rural and urban youth (4th-8th grade) on safety, cultural preservation and healthy lifestyles through traditional subsistence resource use. This project would develop a curriculum for classroom use that would teach youth about different cultures, marine mammals, geography, food safety and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. To develop this curriculum and the accompanying materials, the youth who are designing it will consult with and use knowledge gained from elders in their communities. The project proposes to create educational and instructive kits with video presentation(s) and pamphlets about subsistence hunting, safety and traditional use of resources for school curriculums in both rural and urban schools. The proposal also encourages communication and sharing experiences through social media and would benefit youth from Alaska and Russia. This communication would contribute to the development of the materials by providing valuable feedback. Once the lessons and materials are implemented and distributed, sharing through social media and virtual gatherings would allow the students to interact in real-time with those who live and encourage the subsistence lifestyle. The electronic content would be supplementary to the main kit and would offer further information for those who are interested.

The goals of this project are to educate and share information on traditional and customary subsistence resource use, allow others to experience subsistence activities, rural lifestyles and landscapes and to share knowledge gained by consulting elders in the community. The participants would create a safety handout, an educational booklet and an instructive DVD. The DVD would showcase and highlight local culture(s), proper hunting techniques through step-by-step demonstrations, food preparation, cultural traditions associated with subsistence hunting and the value of a healthy subsistence lifestyle. Both elders and youth would be featured prominently in this DVD. Together, these materials would constitute a “subsistence kit” that would be made available to schools statewide and that would become an integral part of classes focusing on Alaska Studies, Geography, Biology, Health and Cultural Studies.

Youth Forum

Community Archaeology Project

CONTRIBUTORS

- **Linda Cooper**, Unalakleet, Alaska
- **Jasen Stalker**, Kiana, Alaska
- **George Pootoogooluk**, Shishmaref, Alaska

During Beringia Days 2011 in Nome, Alaska, a group of youth met to create and propose future projects benefitting the Beringia region and involving archaeology. Through brainstorming and collaboration, the students developed a project with two central goals: the first is to educate and inform youth and the community about archaeological methods and resources from both a scientific and traditional perspective. The second goal is to have students share the information and knowledge they gained through various methods. Youth, elders and the larger community often wish to learn more about objects that were created and used by their ancestors, as well as artifacts used historically by the elders in their community. They are also interested in the methods, results and overall subject of archaeology. Sharing this knowledge would include providing information they learned from their elders with people in the scientific community and vice-versa.

The main components of the project as proposed by the students:

- *Archaeological Workshops from a Scientific Perspective*
An archaeologist will travel between communities offering workshops. The workshops will include information on known sites in the specific region, current archaeological projects in area, arctic prehistory according to archaeology and the field methods used in archaeology. Workshops will be offered for one to two weeks for Elementary, Middle School, High School and the Community. The archaeologist will be proactive and will follow through on keeping students involved. This may include working with archaeologists in the area to have older students visit or even help with surveying or excavation of a site. High School students may also continue their interest in archaeology through distance learning college courses.

- *Archaeological Workshops from a Traditional Perspective*
In addition to learning about objects and the stories behind the objects from a scientific perspective, students felt it is important for themselves and the community to learn from others in their community. Learning about the historic way of doing things and the way people used the objects will help them to understand some of the cultural significance of archeological discoveries. Elders and community members will teach the workshops on a weekly or monthly basis. They will share how they lived and what they used to do. This may include how they hunted or fished for animals, teaching how to make and use tools and which materials they used.
- *Sharing Knowledge*
Knowledge obtained at the scientific workshops will be shared during traditional workshops, and knowledge gained at traditional workshops will be shared at the scientific workshop. This exchange will not only allow students to share what they learned but also help the scientific community gain insight into how the objects they find in archeological studies have been used traditionally. Students will also spread the knowledge they obtain by traveling to other communities and giving presentations using the Internet. Students may use video conferencing, create websites and use social networking, such as Facebook to continue sharing the knowledge gained in this project with a larger audience.

Students are very passionate about this project for many reasons. They want to learn about their past. They also want learn how to make and use the tools that their elders used as youth. They want to incorporate traditional knowledge with ongoing scientific research so that others have a better understanding about their culture. This project would also be an opportunity to learn about a career option that could be significant in helping them learn about and share their culture.