

## **Alaska/Chukotka Climate Change Examination 2008-2011 Summary**

West High students have benefited greatly from a three-year project with the Shared Beringian Heritage Program of the National Park Service.

Students have had the opportunity to learn about politics, diverse cultures, government policies, climate change indicators, scientific observation and language. Best of all, they have seen that it is possible to communicate across cultures and languages to achieve common understanding and create shared goals for their future.

Highlights have included the opportunity to speak with government leaders at national and local levels, interviews with scientists and elders, and the sharing of cultural rituals and games. Students gained an appreciation for the knowledge and wisdom of indigenous people in their regions, and they learned how powerful the results are of language acquisition. One student found family on the opposite side of the Bering Strait. Others formed a bond that has lasted over the four-year period and shows every promise of continuing. Most recently, students were able to contribute important data to bird and plant study sites.

Benefits to students have been numerous: they have made friends across the Strait. They have learned to use scientific language to communicate. Some students have had their writing published or been able to participate as full members in international conferences by presenting at Beringia Days. American students have used their experience as a stepping stone to elite university programs. Their volunteerism and participation set them apart from other applicants.

Students will take these experiences into their futures as they become tomorrow's leaders. Russian students recognize that "green" policies are something that Americans are passionate about and that they can have an effect on such policies in their own country. They have stated that they realize how important it is to guard their part of the planet from harm, and they are taking steps to lessen their impact. Americans have seen that they must model behavior that helps protect the Earth and that they must work toward a better future for all the world's people.

For more details, please see the products for the three years of this project.