



ARCTIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Cultural Education Program Report

2023

AUTHORED BY:

Katie Qaggun Roseberry

Dear AEF supporter

Arctic Education Foundation was established in 1977 to provide support and assistance to Iñupiat students pursuing higher education. Since then, AEF has contributed millions of dollars to hundreds of North Slope youth seeking college degrees, vocational training and technical certificates. The goal of the foundation is to train and prepare Iñupiat students to enter the professional workforce prepared for any job – especially those common to the North Slope. Our programs are designed to empower students and promote personal success within themselves and their community.

In 2022, Arctic Education Foundation and its board of directors proudly introduced the AEF Cultural Education Program. Recognizing that educating our youth goes beyond the classroom, the program was established with the goal of teaching practical, real world cultural knowledge and practices rooted in the traditional Iñupiaq way of life. It's an endeavor that focuses on ensuring cultural values and traditions are passed down to the next generation.

The program brings cultural curricula to North Slope youth and is designed to help ensure that our communities maintain a traditional connection to their young people. Arctic Education Foundation provides that historical connection through subsistence hunting, language, arts, and knowledge

of the land curriculums with hands-on learning and experiences. As we continue to grow and develop additional resources to incorporate into the program, we look forward to working with organizations and communities that recognize and support cultural preservation.

Quyanaqpak to our sponsors, community members, volunteers and staff who have helped to make AEF's Cultural Education Program a successful, invaluable experience for Iñupiat youth!

With deep gratitude,



Monica Wiehl
AEF Director



Continuing tradition

In 2022, Arctic Education Foundation implemented its Cultural Education Program. Through the program, opportunities to pass on traditional knowledge and engage youth within the Iñupiaq culture were made available to the North Slope.

The Cultural Education Program aims to address an observed need to get young people more actively involved in the Iñupiaq culture, and had three initial focus areas including a Culture Camp, Traditional Art Workshops as well as Traditional Plant Workshops. In its second year, additional focus areas were implemented into the program including a Whaling Workshop, and Meet-and-Greet cultural activities.



AEF Culture Camp

In 2023, the Arctic Education Foundation's Culture Camp was held July 14-21 for youth ages 12-14 years old. The regional camp was an opportunity for kids to get involved with the Iñupiaq culture and traditions and accommodated up to 28 youth from the North Slope, Anchorage and Fairbanks.

They learned about Iñupiaq heritage and participated in hands-on activities, including fishing, hunting, Iñupiaq history and knowledge, Arctic survival, camping in the Arctic and more.

AEF believes that cultural youth development programs, such as this camp, instill a sense of self identity within our ancestral roots. It believes its programs can be a way for communities to form stronger bonds, for youth to learn invaluable knowledge of their culture and for traditions of the past to be handed down to future generations.



Pulayaaq Camp

Jonathan Kunnallaq Aiken Sr. and Mabel Aiken camped in the Pulayaaq area for many years. They often travelled by snowmachine or Argo to fish and hunt caribou from the end of June through September – eventually putting a cabin there. They would also travel by Lund boat from Pulayaaq to their upper cabin at Tupaagruk river to hunt and fish.

Jonathan Sr.'s siblings Mary Lou Leavitt, Rebecca Adams and Robert Aiken Sr. also have cabins on the Pulayaaq and Tupaagruk 2 rivers.

After they passed, Jonathan and June Aiken and their family continued to travel by boat, Argo, snowmachine and ATV to the Pulayaaq cabin to hunt for caribou and set fishnets in the area. They also traveled by riverboat to Inaru and Atqasuk to gather berries or to the Ukpiksuu area to catch tuttu.

The Donovan Family

In 2023, **Michael Quunig Donovan** and **Ruby Mitchak Donovan**, daughter of Jonathan and June Aiken, hosted the AEF Culture Camp at Pulayaaq Camp – their family campsite.

The Donovan family is very active in the Iñupiaq lifestyle, and Quunig and Ruby have their own whaling crew that hunts whales for the community of Utqiagvik each year. It's a year-round responsibility for their family to hunt and provide for their community. From whaling to camping and everything in between, Michael and Ruby continue to practice traditions passed down to them and teach the same knowledge to their kids and others.

Elder Recognition

Having Elders present was a priority of the AEF Culture Camp. Elders are highly valued and respected as they are cultural knowledge bearers, healers, advisors, leaders and teachers. Their welcoming energy brings everyone together and teaches us of the relationships we have with not only each other, but also the land, water and animals that sustain us.

Quyanaqpauraq, a big thank you, to **Lewis Brower** who attended the AEF Culture Camp as this year's camp Elder and Lead Guide. He was an integral part of the camp, getting the kids involved with all the activities from chores to storytelling. Brower taught our youth to work with fish and caribou, engaged and encouraged them, and shared his experienced knowledge through the process.

“ In Utqiagvik, after whaling season, we were taught to catch fish, tuttu and gather berries inland to save for Nalukataq (Blanket toss). We also hunt geese, ducks, bearded seals and walrus from the ocean to feed and share with our community for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Nalukataq.”

- June Aiken



Quyanaqpak to AEF Camp Staff

Project Managers:



Monica
Wiehl



Katie
Roseberry

Camp Guides:

Michael Donovan (Lead)
Steven Rexford
Jasun Rexford
Sheldon Adams

Camp Counselors:

Andrea Nasuk Ahyakak
Lagina Yazzie
Jenilee Donovan
Lloyd Pikok Jr.
Charlie Elavgak

Photographer:

Lloyd Pikok Jr.

Boat Driver & Other:

June & Jonathan Aiken
Justin Gatten
DJ Rexford
Jared Nayakik
Bobby Nageak
Ross Wilhelm

Laborers:

Michael Donovan Jr.
Blade Donovan
Hunter Wilhelm



Camp Participants

In 2023, we planned to have three youth attend the camp from each North Slope village, along with two from Anchorage and two from Fairbanks for a total of 28 youth. Open to ASRC shareholders and descendants from all North Slope villages, there was 25 total in attendance:

3

Wainwright

2

Point Lay

6

Utqiagvik

4

Fairbanks

2

Nuiqsut

5

Anchorage

3

Point Hope

The camp application was open to residents from all North Slope villages. Despite attempts to recruit in each community, no applications were received from Atkasuk, Anaktuvuk Pass or Kaktovik. The remaining spaces were made available to other applicants until filled, or until there were no applicants left.



Camp Activities

Orientation

On orientation day, all participants went through several trainings to prepare them for the trip to camp. Arctic Slope Native Association led an activity on mental health and anti-bullying. Participants did team building activities to get to know each other; talked about emotional, psychological and social well-being; coping skills; and learned what bullying is and how it affects others.

Camp Set Up



Overall, we spent five days and four nights at camp, and everyone helped with setting up the campsite as soon as we arrived. With adult help and supervision, the kids placed plywood bases for the tents, assembled Arctic oven tents, set up the heat supply and put together our supplies. Each camper was assigned a tent to sleep in and were given sleeping bags and mats to set up their sleeping quarters with their personal belongings.

Taking care of the site was a camp-wide effort, with youth and adults taking turns cooking and cleaning daily. On the final day at Pulayaaq, everyone packed up their belongings and did a thorough sweep of the campsite for trash and debris. Each group worked together to learn how to take down and pack away their tent and other campsite items and prepare everything to be taken back to town.

Traditional Knowledge & Arctic Survival



During this session, UIC Science spoke about traditional knowledge related to Arctic survival. They taught important points and shared advice everyone should know while traveling in harsh Arctic conditions including requisite gear, equipment and resources that help to keep yourself and others safe. Campers also got a lesson in and practiced tying various types of knots – an important skill to have while on the land.

Fishing



On the first day of camp, the guides took everyone upriver to set fish nets. On days two, three and four they checked the nets and practiced removing fish to place in gunny sacks. Some kids were able rod and reel fish for sulukpaugaq (Arctic grayling) along the bank of the river. On average, we were able to catch approximately 100 fish per day. Everyone participated in cleaning, cutting and setting the fish on racks to dry. All the pivsi were brought back to town and each camper took some home to their families, with the rest distributed to Elders within the community.



On day 2, the guides took everyone upriver to demonstrate how to set a fish net to catch aanaakliq (whitefish). The kids also spent some time rod and reel fishing for sulukpaugaq

(Arctic grayling) along the river. During the excursion, participants were able to learn about the land area, river names, places to go fishing, as well as the types of gear needed to catch area fish.

Thank you to Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation (UIC) for donating wood to construct new drying racks at camp. There were enough supplies for the camp guides to build two A-frame racks while the kids learned and helped as needed.

Hunting



While half of the group checked nets, the other half went with guides to tuttuliaq (hunt caribou). There was a large herd lingering along the river to escape the heat and bugs that came with it and provided the perfect opportunity to hunt. All camp participants witnessed what it is like to hunt caribou and helped to gut the ones that were freshly caught. They learned what it means to nanmak (carry something on your back) and helped to hike the day's catch back to the boats.

Through the days at Pulayaaq, youth also learned about different parts of the caribou and which parts are good for eating, what to be cautious of, and what you can do with other parts of the caribou that aren't eaten. They harvested itchauraq (fatty membrane around caribou stomach), caribou heart, tongue and liver.

Traditional Plants



While out for day excursions, camp guides and attendees stopped to identify traditional plants found along the river such as quaġaq (sour dock), ippiq (bistort) and itqiliġruk (woolly lousewort; aka sugar flowers). We talked about ways quaġaq could be eaten and many of the kids tasted the leaves for the first time. One of our counselors had shared that the quaġaq flowers are edible and have a sweet flavor when eaten at their peak. Some of them decided to taste the flowers. Several kids recognized the itqiliġruk vibrant pink flowers and showed their friends how to enjoy the sweet nectar at the flower's base.

Traditional Food Preparation



The kids had plenty of hands-on practice cutting tuttu meat and aanaakliq (whitefish). On the first day, they practiced cutting meat into strips for fresh paniqtaq (dried meat). The second and third days, they worked on cutting all the fish for pivsi (dried fish). With the freshly caught tuttu, they took turns cutting caribou meat, organs and vegetables for a big pot of heart and tongue suu to be enjoyed with qaqqulaaq (Sailor Boy crackers). Several camp guides marinated strips of fresh meat and grilled it for everyone to snack on while they cut fish.

On their last day together, campers had the choice to learn the process of naqitchi (making bread dough) or to make aqpiq pie. They also worked on cutting and cooking maktaaġ (beluga skin and blubber) bites for everyone to try. That evening, everyone enjoyed freshly made uqsruquaqtat (donuts), pie and maktaaġ.

Camp Games



An important part of the AEF Culture Camp experience is not only for youth to learn invaluable knowledge of their culture and for traditions of the past to be handed down to future generations, but also to build new relationships with their peers. While at camp, the kids spent free time interacting through games and enjoyed playing football, frisbee, corn hole, card games and swimming in the river to cool off.

Junior Whalers



The Iñupiat Heritage Center (IHC) hosted a fun interactive learning lesson about the history of the Utqiagvik and Iñupiat people who have resided there. Speakers gave a great historical overview before passing out a packet for the kids to complete as they walked through the museum. They learned about whaling and other traditions, tools, local animals, clothing and more. Upon completion of this session, they earned a Junior Whaler badge and a copy of the book, *The Tigara Eskimos and Their Environment*.

Storytelling

Lewis Brower is a great storyteller who quickly captured everyone's interest as soon as he started talking to the campers. When he was done sharing, he invited everyone to share their own stories one-by-one. It's not always easy to stand up in front of a group and talk, but the kids were so comfortable with each other that they happily volunteered to share about their personal experiences, silly stories and traditional life lessons.

Throughout the camp, the guides would occasionally mention stories about different areas, one of which was siñiktaǵnaiḷaq - the place where you don't sleep/overnight. There are multiple areas that share this name, but all have the same common theme of being a dangerous place to sleep for one reason or another. There was an area upriver from Pulayaaq that was called by this name and so they shared why it was named as such.

AEF Culture Camp Impact

Traditionally, camping was an annual family affair that provided an opportunity for direct and extended family members to come together to hunt and gather their traditional foods to ensure they had sustenance for the winter. It was also a time to pass down knowledge, stories and traditions. In modern society, not everyone is able to participate in these experiences due to barriers such as income, cultural disconnect and other challenges. The AEF Culture Camp aims to capture the population of youth who may not have the opportunity to experience camping on the land, and to teach a new generation about traditional lifestyles that are useful even today.

Having youth come from different locations creates a fun and exciting environment for them to build relationships with each other and strengthen village bonds. Through their conversations, they begin to realize the similarities and differences between their communities and embrace the knowledge they do know by sharing it with their new friends. As our upcoming generations move into adulthood and become leaders, these inter-community relationships will become a valuable way for them to connect.



2023 Culture Camp Sponsors



AEF WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING CAMP SPONSORS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Arctic Slope Community Foundation (ASCF)

\$70,000

Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS)

\$20,000

North Slope Borough (NSB)

\$20,000

Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA)

\$20,000

Alaska Community Foundation (ACF)

\$15,000

First Alaskans Institute

\$15,000

Santos

\$10,000

Conoco Phillips

\$7,500

Hilcorp

\$5,000

THANK YOU ALSO TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS FOR SUPPORTING THE AEF CULTURE CAMP THROUGH TIME AND IN-KIND DONATIONS:

Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS)

Donated three camp guides, lent a boat, ATV and tent to use for the camp

Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation (UIC)

Contributed \$8,000 for housing costs, and donated plywood and wood planks

Eskimos Inc.

Donated a \$5,000 fuel gift card

Northern Air Cargo

Donated two freight shipments from Anchorage to Barrow

Workshops

Throughout 2023, Arctic Education Foundation hosted various workshops and activities for middle school and high school aged students within the North Slope Borough School District. These workshops and events facilitated cultural learning opportunities for North Slope youth to get them interested and involved in Iñupiaq culture.

Traditional Art Workshops

The 2023 Traditional Art Workshops focused on drum-making and sewing sea otter headbands. The drum-making workshop was held for 10 Kiita Learning Community students in Utqiagvik. **Herman Ahsoak** walked them through the process of steaming the wood to bend it into shape, adding the handle and finally applying the material to finish the drums. Each student completed their own drum just in time to celebrate at Kivgiq – a local messenger feast celebration with several days of drumming and dancing.

Elizabeth Rexford traveled to Point Hope to teach 18 middle school and high school youth how to sew their own sea otter headbands. During this 2-day workshop, participants cut patterns, learned how to personalize their headband size, sewed all the pieces together and took home their completed projects.

Quyanaqpak to Herman Ahsoak and Elizabeth Rexford for teaching this year's traditional art workshops!



Traditional Plant Workshops

Iļisaġvik College and Arctic Education Foundation staff partnered to host a variety of traditional plant workshops to youth in Atqasuk. During the two days of workshops, **Jerica Leavitt** and **Katie Roseberry** taught the Meade River School elementary, middle and high school classes how to make aqpik jam, stinkweed salve, qunulliq jelly, traditional plant smoothies, and shared information about the plant names and traditional uses.

Quyanaqpak to Jerica Leavitt and Katie Roseberry for teaching this year's plant workshops.



Whaling Workshops

In the spring of 2023, AEF held a series of whaling workshops that taught youth and adult participants the processes associated with whaling. **Joni Edwardsen**, **Sylvia Ahsoak** and **Flora Aiken** taught seven women how to split and refine tendons and then braid the strands into ivalu. **Isabell Elavgak** and Flora Aiken taught 10 high school students about amiq (sewing seal skins for a skin boat) and how to do the waterproof stitches for an umiapiaq (skin boat used for whaling). Lastly, in partnership with the Iñupiat Heritage Center, AEF conducted a sled-making workshop in Wainwright for 10 middle school and high school-aged youth, taught by **Edwin Bodfish** and **Ralph Aveoganna**.

Quyanaqpak to our partners and to Arctic Slope Community Foundation who funded the 2023 AEF cultural workshops, and to all the staff, teachers and others who supported the workshops!



UIC Science & Culture Fair

Arctic Education Foundation partnered with Iḷisaḡvik College to host a traditional plant session for youth during the annual UIC Science and Culture Fair. During this event, Jerica Leavitt and Katie Roseberry engaged youth for an interactive experience of handling, tasting and using traditional plants in different ways. They made qurḡulliq (mountain sorrel) juice, tasted qurḡulliq jelly and boiled quaḡaq (sour dock), went on a plant scavenger hunt and learned about the qulliq (seal oil lamp).

Meet-&-Greet Cultural Activities

In the fall, AEF hosted Meet-and-Greet events with scholarship recipients attending the University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Alaska Anchorage and Iḷisaḡvik college to share information on scholarships and program opportunities while enjoying freshly made tuttu soup and other niqipiaq foods. In its second year, the Cultural Education Program hosted a pickled maktak-making session with the students at each school. Students were provided a copy of the recipe and kept their own jars of fresh pickled maktak to enjoy that school year.

Upcoming Opportunities

Regional Culture Camp :

This week-long culture camp is an opportunity for middle school-aged youth (12-14 years old) to travel to a North Slope village location and be immersed within the Iḷupiaq culture. Scheduled for the summer, this camp will take youth out on the land to learn about subsistence hunting, fishing, traditional art, plants, Iḷupiaq language, traditional food preparation, and land knowledge and history. This experience helps youth to build friendships, connections with youth from other villages, get involved with seasonal cultural activities and so much more.

Traditional Plant and Art Workshops:

Alternating village locations in which they are held each year, topics for these educational workshops vary and are meant to get youth shareholders involved in the Iḷupiaq culture by providing free learning opportunities – with tools and supplies provided. These workshops will likely continue to be held in late summer and throughout the fall.

College Meet & Greet Events:

AEF looks forward to continuing to offer cultural learning opportunities to our scholarship recipients attending college in Alaska. Topics for these mini learning sessions focus on different aspects of the Iḷupiaq culture and may include traditional plants, art, language, food preparation, or other cultural knowledge or skills.

Whaling Workshops:

Focused on preparation activities for spring whaling, these workshops have traditionally been based in Utqiaḡvik. AEF will host several different workshops in the winter/spring for youth to get involved with whaling, gain knowledge about local whaling traditions, and hands-on learning to make tools, garments and more. Keep a look out for social media posts and announcements for these upcoming events!



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