NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Madeline Hickman, President
Members of the Board

THROUGH: Dr. Caitlin Santos, Superintendent

THROUGH: Megan Williams, Director of Finance

FROM: Qaġġuna Tenna D. Pili, Director of Iñupiaq Education
Tennessee Judkins

DATE: October 28, 2026

SUBJECT: **Contract Under $50K – Story Knife Studio**

Memo No. SB27-070
(Informational Item)

NSBSD Policy Manual:

BP 3311, Bids: The district shall purchase….services on a competitive bidding basis when required by law and whenever it appears to be in the best interest of the district to do so. All bids under federal awards must be made in accordance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.320.

BP 3312, Contracts: The Superintendent or designee may enter into contracts and memoranda of agreement on behalf of the district. All contracts and memorandums of agreement with a dollar value of $50,000 or greater must be approved by the School Board.

NSBSD Strategic Plan Summary:

Family & Community Collaboration

Goal 1: Prioritize and implement intentional and purposeful partnerships.

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Goal 2: All students perform at or above grade level

Issue Summary:

The NSBSD Iñupiaq Education Department seeks to contract with Story Knife Studio to provide culturally responsive animation and visual media production services for the North Slope History & Culture course developed through the Repair, Rebuild, Revitalize (RRR) initiative. This work will support the Iñupiaq Education Department's efforts to strengthen locally developed curriculum by incorporating engaging, culturally grounded visual introductions that reflect the histories, perspectives, and experiences of North Slope communities.

Under this contract, Story Knife Studio will develop short, animated introductions for course units and lessons, incorporating custom maps, infographics, archival images, and text-based visuals to support student understanding of regional history and cultural content. Six scripts are currently prepared for production, representing approximately 21 minutes of finished animation and an estimated 57 supporting visual assets. Additional scripts remain in development and may be incorporated as funding and project scope allow.

Story Knife Studio's regional animators bring valuable local knowledge and cultural perspective to the production process, helping ensure that the visual storytelling, place names, and historical framing accurately reflect the communities represented in the curriculum. These animated resources will

become District-owned instructional assets that can be used consistently across classrooms and remain available for future educators and students.

Background:

The Repair, Rebuild, Revitalize (RRR) initiative supports the development of culturally responsive, place-based curriculum that reflects the history, knowledge, and experiences of North Slope communities. As the North Slope History & Culture course advances toward implementation, the Iñupiaq Education Department continues to identify opportunities to strengthen instructional materials and ensure that regional perspectives are meaningfully represented throughout the curriculum.

The proposed animation work will provide an additional layer of cultural and historical context through visual storytelling developed by animators from the region. This approach is particularly valuable for presenting complex or sensitive historical topics, including epidemics, demographic changes, and trade history, in ways that are accessible, respectful, and engaging for students. By embedding culturally grounded introductions directly into course materials, the District can provide consistent instructional context regardless of changes in teaching staff, while creating lasting educational resources that support the continued use and sustainability of the North Slope History & Culture curriculum.

Length of Contract:

November 15, 2026 – June 30, 2027

Funding Source and Contract Amount:

This contract would come out of the Iñupiaq Education Department Professional & Technical budget. Account Code: 100.200.120.000.410, not to exceed $25,000.00

Available Budget:

Account Code: 100.200.120.000.410

Compliance with BP 3311.

This contract is for specialized professional and creative consulting services requiring expertise in animation, visual storytelling, and the culturally responsive presentation of North Slope history and cultural knowledge. Story Knife Studio's animators are from the region and bring familiarity with local histories, communities, and cultural perspectives essential to developing authentic instructional media.

The proposed services extend beyond general animation production by requiring the thoughtful interpretation of historical content, culturally appropriate visual representation, and integration of regionally grounded storytelling into existing educational materials. This specialized expertise will support the District in producing instructional resources that accurately reflect the communities and histories represented in the North Slope History & Culture course.

BP 3311, Exemption #3, exempts professional or consultant services, including educational and specialized creative services, from formal purchasing procedures. This contract is presented under that exemption based on the specialized professional animation and culturally responsive educational media production services being provided.

Signature: Caitlin Santos (Nov 3, 2026 10:43:39 AKST)

Email: Caitlin.Santos@nsbsd.org

Signature:

Email: megan.williams@nsbsd.org

Signature:

Email: tennessee.judkins@nsbsd.org