

February 20, 2023

School colleagues,

One of my goals as Mt. Edgecumbe High School's superintendent is to increase the visibility and use of our Alaska Native languages in our school environment. Another goal is to strengthen the relationship between our school and the schools of our students' home communities.

I would like to visually celebrate the high schools and home communities of our students. Here is a snapshot of the process I began with the information I brought from my own home district. I would like to expand it to include the home school of each of our current students. If you are willing, please provide:

- the official name of your high school
- the official name of your community
- the official name of your mascot
- a jpeg image of your school's mascot
- your community's Indigenous name
- the Indigenous name of your high school's mascot, in the language of your community



If your community has already approached this process, it may be easy to provide. I have attached my experience exploring this process to highlight some of the considerations I encountered both to demonstrate my understanding of the complexity of this request and to provide some background for those new to this process. For communities with multiple schools and/or multiple languages, please share whatever information makes most sense to share.

Please also let me know if the names you provide are using the official orthography, as adopted by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

I will gladly share the information I collect from schools across the state with anyone interested in receiving it. Though the scope of this project is fairly small, its impact can be huge. Thank you for your time and assistance in this project. I hope to hear from you at your convenience.

Respectfully,

Suzzuk Mary Huntington
Superintendent

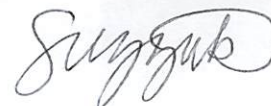
Indigenous place name and mascot initiative - background information

In my previous position as Coordinator of Cultural Programs for Bering Strait School District, I made an effort to find the Inupiaq, Yup'ik, and Akuzipik (St. Lawrence Island Yupik) names of our communities and mascots. Some of that information was readily available while some of it required deeper research or even additional work from communities and Elders.

- For my home community of Shishmaref, it was easy because it is common knowledge within the community that the Inupiaq name for our village is Kigiqtaq and our mascot "Northern Lights" is Kiugzat, both of which use the official Inupiaq orthography spelling.
- It was more difficult in Teller, because the community was not a permanent Inupiaq village originally but is now, with families settling there from more than one original site. They actually have a number of acceptable names for their community but are still in the process of officially adopting which they will use formally.
- The neighboring village of Brevig Mission also has an interesting history. The struggle came not from the name of the village but because we could not pinpoint the best translation for their mascot Huskies when speaking to most fluent Inupiaq speakers, even though the translation for dog is also commonly known.
- The last mascot I was able to find was Little Diomedes' "Dateliners" which I expected would be difficult, but a fluent Elder of Injalik's dialect quickly provided "Killegmuit" which roughly translates into "people at the border or boundary". The factor that took the most time was finding and connecting with the Elder.
- A detail I neglected to notice when I first made posters for our district tournaments was the plural form of some mascots. It was common knowledge to use Carayaq in Stebbins for their Grizzlies, Qaffik in Shaktoolik for their Wolverines but it took some adjustment for some of us to get comfortable with Carayat and Qaffiit, their plural forms.
- Golovin people were familiar with how to say lynx but were less comfortable with how to spell their word for lynx: Niutuayit (which we also forgot to pluralize initially). This was especially tricky for me to nail down because most of my Elders offering translations had slightly different pronunciations for the word so I had to determine which would represent the word from the community's own dialect, which will be a familiar struggle for anyone involved in language revitalization efforts.

Working through this process was illuminating and rewarding on many levels. It is a complex process that evokes many unanticipated emotions but is also very powerful in validating and moving forward the work of reclaiming and revitalizing our languages, identities and practices. I share these little snapshots of my journey in the process in hopes that we can work together to continue celebrating and supporting our Alaska Native languages.

Thank you for taking the time to consider joining this effort. Please feel free to reach out if you would like any support in navigating this process or have additional thoughts and ideas. I would love to connect with others interested in saturating our environment with our Native languages.



Taikuu ~ Baasee' ~ Gunalchéesh ~ Qu yana ~ Háw'aa ~ Tsen'ji ~ Qu yanaa ~ Mahsi' ~ Qağaasakung ~ Chin'an
Igamsiqanaghhalek ~ Nt'oyaxsn ~ Maasee' ~ Qu yanaq ~ 'AwA'ahdah ~ Tsin'aen ~ Dogedinh ~ Tsin'ëë ~ Thanks