



NORTH SLOPE EDUCATION PARTNERS WORK AS ONE

September 28, 2022

Nanaaqiurat Tumitchianjit, *new tracks for our communities*, met at the end of September at Ilisagvik College to reaffirm their commitment to atauchimutka, *working together as one*.

Nanaaqiurat Tumitchianjit, a quad board composed of the leadership of the North Slope Borough (NSB), the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD), Ilisagvik College, and the Iñupiat Community of The Arctic Slope (ICAS) began meeting in January of 2022. The goal of the the collaboration is to maximize equity in educational, career and technical training opportunities across the North Slope.

Nanaaqiurat Tumitchianjit is part of an ongoing process to manifest the vision put forth in Eben Hopson Sr.'s famous education speech in 1975 where he set forth the vision of creating an Inupiat school system, reflecting Inupiat educational philosophies and transmitting Inupiat values and history: "I do not want my children to learn that we were "discovered" by Columbus or Vitus Bering.... I do not want to see school planning surveys which list hunting, fishing, whaling or trapping as a "social" or "recreational" activity," Hopson said.

Working to break down the silos that have existed between organizations, Nanaaqiurat Tumitchianjit created four subgroups, each with representatives from all of the quad partners to work on different aspects of education on the North Slope including: Student Outcomes,

Broadband and Infrastructure, the Qatqiññiagvit Program for career exploration, and the Deadhorse Technical Training Center.

At the September meetings, these groups gave progress reports to the steering committee, formed a new subcommittee to address Inupiat Education and signed a Memorandum of Agreement emphasizing the need for increased cooperation and collaboration between the four regional organizations.

The new subcommittee on Inupiat Education will begin meeting to focus on ways to center Iñupiaq language and culture in education from early childhood education through career training. David Vadivelo, the Chief School Administrator at the NSBSD affirmed his intention to reintroduce immersion language instruction into the school system in phases starting in 2024.

Everyone agreed that the meetings are working to break down the silos that have existed between organizations and to improve inter-agency communication. “It’s a total one-eighty from January to this month,” said Justina Wilhelm, Iñisaġvik College President, “You can feel it in the room – people are connected.”

Wilhelm said the signing of the MOA was the culmination of much hard work. Elder George Edwardson, ICAS President, was the first to sign.

The agreement includes a commitment to work together in good faith and to “utilize our resources to achieve equity in educational services and outcomes for all the students and residents of all North Slope communities.”

Nanaaqiurat Tumitchianjit will meet again in January of 2023.