



*Nay'dini'aa Na' Hwt'aene
Ugheldze' Xuk'anotta Nene'*

Nurture the Land and People Project



Environmental stewardship to our Ahtna people means caring for the resources in the area so that it ensures that they are available for future generations. Honoring the animal means utilizing all parts of the animal for food, tools, and clothing. Not taking animals unless we need food and not taking too many of one species of animal or plant ensures future availability. Clearing the forests by burning diseased or dead trees in winter means safer trails for travel and hunting and minimized forest fires.

Ancient Life Ways

Traditionally the everyday lifeway activities that define the 'Ahtna culture' were inseparable from planned and purposeful 'environmental stewardship.'

Modern Challenges

Over the last century, cultural destruction of this intimate relationship has been interrupted and damaged due to outside influences including displacement from traditional lands, forced boarding schools, and epidemics and diseases. Lessons vital to cultural survival are less frequent and cultural knowledge is at risk of being lost forever to future generations.

Project Proposal

We proposed to strengthen cultural connections to traditional environmental stewardship practices and bolster physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health among Elders and youth at our Ya Ne Dah Ah Tribal School.

We utilized new media strategies to document our project and provide ongoing learning opportunities including Facebook activities posting, utilizing iAuthor to create an interactive learning module, and our web page to document a curriculum developed.





Project Plan: Step 1 - Identify Monthly Themes

August - Respect for Elders & Others; Practice of Traditions; and Fishing, Blueberry, Currant, and Raspberry Picking - No Interview for August

September - Respect, Care, & Provision for the Family; Self-Sufficiency; High Bush Cranberry, Watermelon Berries, and Rosehip Picking; and Moose, Caribou, and Sheep Hunting – Interview Berry Picking

October - Hard work; Responsibility to Tribe; Moose & Bird Hunting - Interview Stewardship and Hunting

November - Honesty; Honoring Native History; Arts; and Small game Hunting & Trapping – Interview Art

December - Unity; Trade & Visiting; Tribal Cooperation; Storytelling; and Arts - Interview Crafts and Culture

January - Honor Our Ancestors; Leadership; Sovereignty; Katie John; and Subsistence – Interview Art with Animal Skins

February - Humor; Caring; and Healthy Foods (Traditional) - Interview Sovereignty and Founding of the Ya Ne Dah Ah School

March - Family Relations (Potlatches); Sharing; Gardening; and Food Security - Interview Spring Activities

April - Respect for the Land; Stewardship; Spirituality; Wild Potato Harvesting; and Birch Bark Syrup and Baskets - Interview Walking and Stewardship

May - Love for Children; Respect for Everyone; Fairness; Fishing; Service Projects for Elders; and Stewardship – Interview with Our Traditional Chief

*Interviews were scheduled when Elders were available.

Photo - Elder and Chickaloon Village Traditional Council Treasurer Albert Harrison.

Step 2 - Develop Curriculum Plan

- Students draft interview questions based on the themes identified for the month and goals for the Elder interview.
- Interviews take place with students helping video, and asking interview questions.
- Activities with the Elder or another Elder incorporating the same theme are planned and take place, and/or field trip scheduled around the theme (e.g. visiting the recycling center).
- Ahtna language words identified and introduced.
- Students write a blog identifying key lessons learned during the Elder Interview.
- Photos, videos, and blogs are posted to Facebook as appropriate.
- I-Author updated with lessons learned regarding hunting, fishing, recycling, re-using, and stewardship.
- Chickaloon Village Traditional Council & Community are updated on the project quarterly at a minimum.

Step 3 - Recruit & Interview Elders

Step 4 - Schedule Activities

Example of Scheduled Activities:

Berry picking

Making jelly

Beading

Art walk in nature

Removing quills from a porcupine for use in making jewelry

Drumming & Signing

Plant food walks

Recycling center field trip

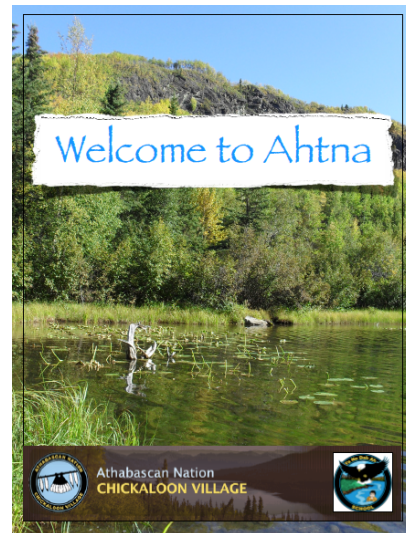
Step 5 - Students Blog About Activities and Post Photos to Facebook to share with Tribal citizens.

Blogging was identified as key to help students enhance writing skills and to document learning comprehension.

“For the students, this project included planning, writing interview questions, video recording Elders, blogging about the interview, and hands on activities with the Elders.”

~Lisa Wade, Education Director

Step 6 - Update i-Author Application with Lessons for Future Review by Students



Project Example: Berry Picking & Jam Making



Elders Invited to the Interview Marge Gagnon and Penny Westing for the Activity of Making Jelly.

Goal: Understand the importance of ancestral and modern berry picking methods, and the many uses for berries.
Learn Ahtna words for berries.

Activities:

- Develop Elder Interview Questions
- Record the Interview with Video and Photos
- Make Jelly/Jam
- Writing Assignment About the Interview and/or Activity
- Video Editing of Elder Interview (Older Students & Teachers)
- Posting Photos on Facebook (Teacher)
- Ahtna Language Practice
- Post Ahtna Words/Recordings in i-Author



Questions Developed by the Students:

1. Do you like to eat berries?
2. Do you like to go berry picking?
3. Did you pick berries as a kid?
4. What kinds of berries do you like?
5. Have you ever planted berries?
6. Where have you picked berries?
7. Do you know which berries are poisonous?
8. Did you go berry picking this year?



Ahtna Language Words

- Dahts'enc'ogge' = Raspberry
- Xay Gigi = Low Bush Cranberry
- Tsan/tsay = High Bush Cranberry
- Gigi Gheli = Blueberry
- Gaani yide nt'aeyi? = What is this?
- Gigi sunt'aeyi = This is a berry.
- Gigi ts'unbae' = We are picking berries.



Sample Student Blog:

One sunny day, my class went on a berry picking field trip. We drove up the Glenn Highway for about an hour. Along the way we stopped at the Matanuska Glacier for lunch. We were looking for berries but couldn't find any. We drove for about another half an hour, feeling like we weren't going to find any at all that day. We finally arrived at a place that our teacher, Miss Tina, said she had picked berries at before. We drove up a large hill to get to the berry picking place. It was a little scary because we were on a small road on the large hill in our school van. We stopped to look for blueberries...but there were none! Feeling discouraged and about ready to give up, we checked on last place, a popular spot that Miss Tina thought would have been picked over by then. We found lots of berries there! For some of us it was the first time picking berries, for others it was a third or fourth time. Because we had spent so much time looking in spots that didn't have berries, we didn't have long to pick before heading back to school. Miss Tina said we picked about a quart! We all really enjoyed picking blueberries that day!

Lessons Learned

- Tailor Lessons to the Age of the Students (Our school is comprised of pre-kindergarten to 8th grade students. Some interviews were challenging for younger students to sit through).
- Set a time frame for the interview (Some interviews were 18 minutes and some went over an hour. An ideal interview is less than ½ hour.)
- Allow for plenty of time for activities and pre-plan the purchase of any materials for the Elders.
- It is important to practice the Ahtna language words before the interview and then again after the interview.
- Allow for enough classroom training time on blogging, video editing, uploading information. (This constituted a huge amount of time that we hadn't adequately planned for during the project planning of this project).
- Develop a team of qualified IT and technology support services. (This project was heavily technology focused for documenting purposes. We had to find experts to help with file conversions of videos based on different video equipment used for each interview.)
- Use a tri-pod for making videos with students.
- Have fun with the Elders. This time is as much for them as it is for the students. (Make sure they have coffee, food, are warm enough, and feel valued for what they share).

Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (Nay'dini'aa Na')

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