

# Cultural values are important to teaching students

Dear Editor:

My name is Caroline M. Frank. I was born and raised in Arctic Village, Alaska which is located 250 miles northeast of Fairbanks, Alaska. My father was a minister so as a child we traveled around to surrounding villages. We lived in a village for 5-6 years then moved on to another village. In my intermediate school years, I spent one year in the Wrangell Institute and my four years of high school, I spent at Mt. Edgecumbe High School. I graduated in 1972 and continued my education.

I graduated with a BA in Education in 1990.

As a child, I always wanted to be a teacher. I am fluent in my language since it was the language spoken as I was growing up. I have always struggled with English because I grew up not speaking and understanding the language. I am very proud that the BIA system didn't hurt my use of my Native language. I am still fluent in my language and can also speak English. I can also read and write my language. When I was in college, I realized that deepening my own heritage made me

smarter. I could face more challenges because I learned to work hard to reach my goals and keeping my language and culture helped me reach that goal.

As a Native teacher, I realize how important it is to teach my students the value of their language and culture. My School District piloted an immersion program in my school which I enjoy teaching very much, but don't have enough curriculum support for it. I teach my students in my own language. Preschoolers and kindergartners are taught social skills so we do a lot of communicating and socializing. I

can teach a wide range of my Native skills and am able to change between Gwich'in and English as the situation arises. I can see how easily my students master the academic skills when I teach in my language. I really need a curriculum or continued training that would help me to understand the process of the immersion program. That is one of the reasons why I am strongly supportive of the House Bill 167.

Thank you for your time.

*Caroline M. Tritt-Frank  
Arctic Village, AK*