

Unified Commission to study NSB History

Unified Approach

The North Slope Borough Language Commission and the Commission of History and Culture have merged under one Inupiat Language, Culture, and History Commission.

The merger came as a result of a Borough Assembly Ordinance passed at the May 4 meeting.

The combined Commission reports directly to the North Slope Borough Mayor, Eugene Brower. It recently held reorganizational meetings in Barrow from May 19 - 21, 1982. During those meetings, Edna MacLean was elected as the Commission's Presiding Officer.

"We have been moving from separate beginnings toward a common end," says Edna MacLean. "Now we have reached the point where our paths overlap and will benefit from a unified approach."

Many Projects

The combined Commission's list of projects is as rich and varied as the language, history, and culture of the Inupiat themselves.

The annual Elders Conference, a television Inupiat Literacy series, a computer cultural resource project, a historic site studies, autobiographies from North Slope elders, simultaneous translating workshops, technical terminology workshops, and an Inupiat Circumpolar Conference Exchange Program are just a few of the present projects.

In addition, most of the translating needs of the Borough, from Housing Department tenant announcements to Public Health Department alcohol treatment fliers, are services through the Commission.

Resource People Key

For all these activities, the Commission has just five people on its permanent staff. They are: Leona Okakok, Emma Mongoyak, Alice Solomon, Mabel Smith and Eileen MacLean.

To supplement this staff the Commission relies upon resource people in the communities across the North Slope.

"We simply could not operate without our resource people," says Eileen MacLean. "They include elders, with rich historical backgrounds, and knowledgeable people throughout the Slope, who always seem to be on-call and the willingness to help out."

The Commission Manager also speaks highly of a student helper from the Barrow High School, Sarah Neakok. "She has absorbed a lot about the written language during her time with us. She has just gotten a lot faster dealing with the transcribing work and that helps us out."

Ten Person Board

Some of the resource people the Commission staff calls on for help also serve on the Commission 10-person Board. The Board members are appointed by the Mayor and subject to confirmation by the Assembly for a scattered term of three years.

The first members will serve staggered one-, two-, and three-

year terms to prevent a complete turn-over of Commission members in any one year. The new Commission members include: Alice Words-Nuiqsut, Amos Morry-Anaktuvuk Pass, Walter Akpik, Sr.-Atkasuk, Herman Rexford-Barter Island, Carol Omnik-Pt. Hope, Deputy Presiding Officer Molly Pederson-Barrow, Ronald Brower-Barrow, Waldo Bodfish-Wainwright, Willie Tukrook-Pt. Lay, and Chairperson Edna MacLean-at-large.

There are also alternate Commission members with full voting powers from the respective villages listed above.

Commission Projects:

A Closer Look

The newly combined Language, History, and Culture Commission has an impressive list of planned or on-going projects. Here is a closer look at some of them.

Cipp-Ikpikpak River and Upper Meade River Oral History Project

The goal of this project is collecting information on the history of an important North Slope Region from those who experience it. According to a project report submitted in May, over 15 people locally have been interviewed and some 60 written sources consulted for information on this region.

The interviews were taped and are in the process of being transcribed. The information they reveal will be contained in a final written report. The study is being conducted by William Schneider and Wendy Arundale of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

It is a program for the preservation of Oral History and Traditions. They are well on their way to producing the final written report which they claim, "will be both interesting and valuable to the Borough, its residents, and others interested in the North Slope's history."



Grant Spearman

Cultural Resource Inventory

All available sites on the North Slope with known cultural value will be listed on the computer when this project is completed in the spring of 1983.

Each entry will contain information on location, land conditions, past and present cultural value and research relating to the site. Highly regarded Northern Alaska archaeologist Edwin Hall is heading the project.

Each time the government or an industry proposes a develop-

ment project on the North Slope, the question of the importance of cultural sites in the area comes up. Hall is working to complete an inventory available at the touch of a computer key.

With this information, Borough planners will be able to make a quick, well-informed cultural resource management decisions.

Annual Elder's Conference

Legends, hunting techniques, sewing skills, place-names, people language, music, and many other things that are part of the Inupiat heritage are discussed at this Conference by those who know them best - elders from across the North Slope.

The Commission makes all the arrangements for bringing the elders together for a week each year. In addition, the Commission painstakingly records, transcribes, and translates into Inupiat and English all that is said at the Conference.

The results then are published so they could be shared across the Slope. Commission translator, Leona Okakok, is responsible for much of the translation. It is a process that takes several years but as seen in PUIGUITKAAT, the book of the 1978 Elder's Conference, it is worth the effort.

This year's Elders Conference is scheduled for the week of August 9th in Barrow.

Ulu Valley Land Use Study

This study will try to capture the history of the Ulumiut, who roamed the eastern area of the Brooks Range from the last remaining member of those people, 87-year-old Arctic John Etalook.

Anthropologist Grant Spearman of Anaktuvuk Pass has been interviewing Arctic John and plans to return with him this summer to the Ulu Valley where Arctic John spent his youth.

This is the first, and due to Etalook's age, may be the last attempt at documenting the Ulumiut way of life. As Spearman writes in his study proposal, "It is fortunate that Etalook is of sharp memory and willing to share his knowledge at this time."

Elder Autobiographies

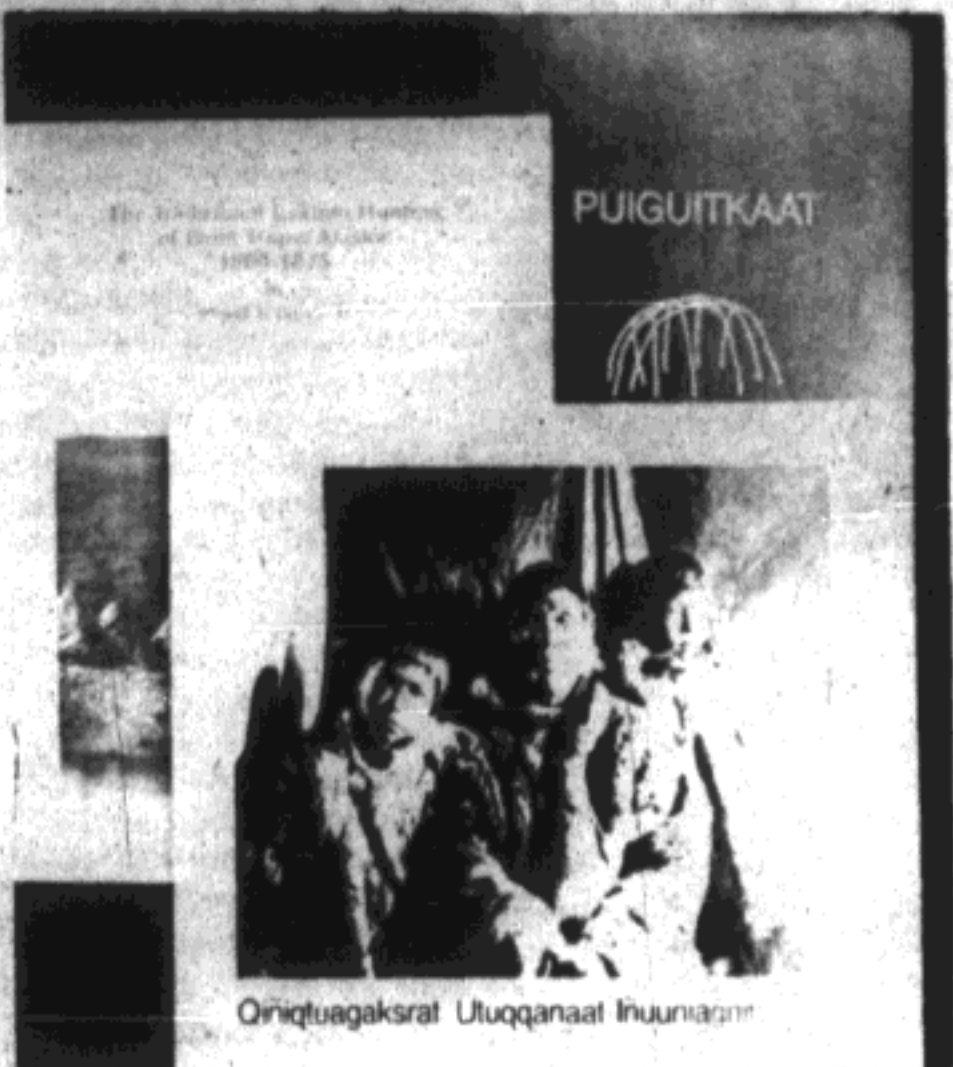
Beginning in Wainwright this summer, the Commission plans to collect the autobiographies of the eldest men and women on the North Slope.

Emman Mongoyak, translator will be asking these elders to tell the wheres, whos, hows, whys, and whens of their life on tape for later publication. It is hoped that this information will preserve not only the knowledge but the personalities of some of the North Slope's most precious resources - its elders.

Terminology Workshops

These workshops are the result of concerns facing translators when translating and they help to solve language issues that come up in day-to-day life in a bilingual community.

As an example, resource people are asked to translate English words, such as "Court-



Qiniqtuagaksrat Uluqanaat Iluumiut

Books! BOOKS! Books! are one way the language, history and culture Commission passes on precious information about our culture collected in the commission's many projects.

House" into Inupiat - "Uqaqsit-aagvik". "Usually there is a concept in Inupiat that is equivalent to the English word.

The Workshops allows us to talk about it and settle on the suitable word," says Commission's Chairperson Edna MacLean.

Translations

The Commission is involved in simultaneous translating training along with its duties of translating at public meetings and for public notices.

Simultaneous translations allow those attending a meeting to put on a headphone and hear a translated version of what is being said. A well-known example of simultaneous translation in practice is the United Nations General Assembly where speeches can be heard over earphones in French, English, or Spanish.

The Commission is working to provide a similar service in English or Inupiat in the North Slope.

"This idea was borne out of attending an Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Greenland where all the meetings had to be translated from one language to another. But, you do see a need in your home ground when one is exposed to so many meetings in both the English and the Inupiat versions," says Eileen MacLean.

Books

Much of the information gathered by the Commission has or is slated to appear in published form. As separate Commissions, both the Language and the History and Culture Commissions produced a number of publications. Now efforts will be combined.

Some of the more immediate plans for printed material development include a calendar, which would include old photo-

graphs of the North Slope and a re-print of an old Barrow school newsletter.

OLD NEWSPAPERS REPRINTED

"Arctic Cub" newspapers written by North Slope students in the "U.S. Government Schools" from 1937 to 1945 are scheduled to go back into print thanks to the North Slope Borough Language, History and Culture Commission.

The newspapers are full of news about village happenings, weddings and school events. As a preview of what to expect, the following story was taken from the earliest April, 1937 issue and was written by that issue's "Editor in Chief."

MAKE WAY FOR THE AIRPLANES!

While I was eating my supper, the church bell rang the second time - telling of the coming service.

After supper was over, I went out and caught up with Rex and several young people who were also going to church.

We were almost halfway when we heard the children shouting, "Tingoon! Tingoon!" (Airplane! Airplane!)

We looked toward the place where they were pointing and saw the airplane which was coming somewhat low.

"Better go down toward the icebergs so the place where it will land may be clear," said Rex.

Toward the icebergs we walked looking at the airplane which was still coming. Thinking that it was too far for us to hear its motor, we watched it.

The airplane was ready to land, but it turned out to be a kite that was hanging on the radio wire.

-Donald Nusingina, Gr.VIII