

EPILOGUE: Rebuilding a Kasgik (Spirit House)

By Apanguluk Charlie Kairaiuk

Apanugpak sat coss-legged, tears mixed with blood dripping on his trembling hands from where his eyes once use to be. He was not crying because he was scared or in pain. He was not crying over the loss of his eyes because he could see without them. He was crying because he realized his people did not want to hear or see the truth. His eyes, taken out by his own people and buried, were in reality, their own eyes. He was forcing them to see too much of the truth and they could not handle it.

Apanugpak, the greatest and most powerful Yup'ik Angalgok-Warrior who ever lived, started thinking about how it all began. Where he was born, how he was born, the things he was taught and what he had to learn. He thought about his initiations into the various stages of his life and the work he was born to. He thought about the visions he had. He thought about the visions which led him to take a long journey south, bringing him to the Old Woman, who was so ancient her eyes had melted into her face, yet she could still see everything; who was so old she no longer had ears yet could hear everything. He thought about returning from that vision quest and seeing his family after two late summers and one spring ago.

Apanugpak thought about the prophecies given to him by the Old Woman and the great burden they were to him because he saw how his people were going to live through each one of them. He saw how his people were going to suffer like none of his people ever suffered before. He saw the numerous deaths that were going to come, that his people were going to live a Great Lie and were destined to deny their own children who they really are. He knew it was going to take a tremendous effort to get away from the clutches of the Dog Eat Dog Society.

Apanugpak looked around and saw his drum and picked it up. He ran his hands over the bearded seal gut drum skin and remembered how the seal came and gave herself to him. He had slept restlessly all night because he could feel and hear the sea moving and calling to him. As soon as he got up, his wife got up, too, went outside with him, faced where the sun rises and said a prayer thanking Ellam Yua, Person of the Universe for this gift of this new day, gave of themselves to him and asked for guidance and protection. As soon as they went back in his wife prepared tundra tea and made sure all his clothing and food were adequate for her husband's journey.

He had been paddling along a string of ice floes when he saw a ripple only a bearded seal can make. He immediately started talking to his relation as not to frighten it. As soon as she came around the ice floe he knew this was the one. The great seal swam over, stopped and stared knowingly at him. She turned her head and exposed her neck so the strike would be a lethal one.

After he got the bearded seal on top of the ice floe, he said a prayer asking her to forgive him and explained he and his people needed her for their nourishment and strength. Then he dug in the middle of the ice floe and got fresh water which he gave her, to ensure a good journey into the spirit world. After he got home they had a village feast since this was the first bearded seal of the spring.

Apanugpak looked around. He saw dance masks, hunting tools and clothing on the walls of the Kasgik (traditional community spirit house.) He focused on the lead ceremonial stick. The carving on it depicted the mythological origin of his tribe. Every single thing he saw had a strong, spiritual and sacred meaning to him. All of these were gifts from Ellam Yua.

The original acts of oppression the Russians, the United States government and foreign religions knowingly, purposely and perpetually committed against the Alaska Native Peoples have evolved into generational cycles of abuse. These abuses continue today for two reasons: 1) The federal government and foreign dominant religious factions continue to force Alaska Natives to assimilate, despite all the evidence the acculturation process has and continues to destroy them as Real Human Beings and 2) The healing medicine for the spiritual afflictions have manifested as a result of these acts of oppression, cannot be found in modern medicine, therapy or within the foreign religious practices. The healing medicine can only be found in the traditional Native healing ceremonies.

Spiritual afflictions happen whenever severe traumatization of the human spiritual, physical, mental and/or emotional being occurs. Then the affliction, depending on its severity, will attach itself to one or more aspects of the human's being. If the affliction is not healed, then in time, it will manifest itself or become a catalyst for any number of spiritual, physical, mental and/or emotional sicknesses.

When the spiritual affliction is not healed, the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional bodies are unable to function in balance with each other. Over time, this lack of balance increases and the person begins to suffer from the resultant ill effects. These important elements of one's being determine the ability and the capacity of each human being. This affects the way one is connected to oneself, to one's environment and to the universe. This affects one's nurturing, growth and understanding of the elements found within self. It affects one's ability to feel, to love or to be loved.

Even though there are specific scientific and medical cures and therapy for normal human ailments these remedies are not working for Alaska Native Peoples because the original

spiritual afflictions have not been healed. The lack of knowledge and understanding of Native cultures, ignorance and even denial of the detrimental spiritual affects of the continued assimilation process are the primary factors preventing the healing and recovery of Alaska Native Peoples. As the result of this, many of our Native People are and will continue to die needlessly.

Spiritual afflictions can be healed through traditional healing ceremonies but this is only the beginning of what needs to be done. The Native spiritual being is said to be like a moist clay ball. When it is deprived of the right amount of moisture, it begins to dry up and the surface cracks. Eventually dried pieces start to fall off. The good thing about clay is when the clay ball and the fallen pieces are remoistened you can reconnect the pieces to make it whole again.

Native Peoples need to heal and rebuild the spirit of their people. The ONLY element needed for healing and recovery is the commitment by Native individuals, families and communities to heal themselves from generational cycles of abuse. The ONLY element needed for rebuilding Native Spirituality is for each tribe and nation to draw on the traditional teachings such as Yugtun Yuyaraq: The Way To Live As A Real Human Being.

Each community must consider rebuilding their Kasgiks, the traditional sacred spirit houses. It is in these places many of the visions were sought and received, seasonal and healing ceremonies practiced and sacred teachings taught. The spirit house is a place where one is constantly reminded of who they really are and why it is important for them to maintain a balance of all their beings. It is a place like their own inner being, their inner power housed within a strong Kasgik.

The Alaska Native Peoples who experience the traditional spiritual affliction healing will enhance the efforts of the scientific and medical communities by removing the main obstacle, to the successful ap-

plication of their medicine and/or therapy to their patients. This is why strong close working relationships with traditional Native healers and the modern scientific and medical communities must be established. It is only through these mutual efforts a truly holistic healing approach can be accomplished.

The importance of the above statements are exemplified by the fact the non-Native people need spiritual healing just as much, or in some cases even more than Native Peoples. This is because they have longer experiences with these same generational cycles of abuse, which began before their ancestors started traveling from their Mother countries. Wherever they traveled they began afflicting the same kind of abuse they received from their own people to any one that unfortunately was in their path.

Many "civilized" people are in a more critical situation than most Native Peoples because they have lost the knowledge and ability to perform spiritual affliction healings. Many non-Natives are leaving their religions because they are not providing holistic spiritual fulfillment. Many are abandoning and denouncing mainstream governing and educational systems because the human mass conscience awakening is creating a realization Real Human Beings cannot live within oppressive/obsessive systems without destroying themselves and their planet.

The important thing to remember, this is not a Native or non-Native, village or city problem. This is OUR problem. We must begin NOW while the knowledge is still available so we do not have to suffer any longer or travel far to get the medicine we need for our people's healing.

It is important to walk on this healing path with this thought in mind. Experience has taught us we must be very careful selecting the people who perform these healing ceremonies. There are many people who do not have the traditional teachings, healing apprenticeship experience or even the knowledge of a Native language which sometimes is essential for understanding what kind of elements one is dealing with. Each village person has the right to question

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any individual who comes in to conduct ANY type of healing workshops about who they are, where they come from, where and how they learned their knowledge, the name or names of their teachers and how to contact them to substantiate their credibility. This is important even though this person may be a Native person, as there are many offering services who do not have the traditional teachings or qualifications to do healing work. Unfortunately, some Natives are marketing themselves as "healers" for the recognition, status, popularity, money it may bring to the individual, instead of as a result of proper training, skill and right intent. What is not realized is they could harm people

more than help them.

Apanugpak stared into a wooden bowl half filled with water. Inside he saw a reflection of the square hole of the Kasgik above. His mind drifted back to the time he spent with his uncle, a holy man, who spoke these words, "Ellam Yua breathed on the soil and the rocks and gave them life. Ever since that time, ever living thing on Mother Earth inherited the power to give life. This power comes in the form of a light found in ourselves, in the four legged, the finned, the winged, the blade of grass and even the water. This light will always connect us to Ellam Yua and all his creations. It is the only thing we need."

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