What is Uqautchim Uglua?

Uqautchim Uglua, is an initiative of Ilisagvik College in partnership with the North Slope Borough School District and ICAS. It will create an immersion day care and teacher training center in Barrow and will support the development of language nests in the villages. The language nest will use the Iñupiaq language and create curriculum based on the Iñupiaq Learning Framework, developed by the North Slope Borough School District. The teacher-training program will bring students together for two-week residencies and deliver courses via distance delivery to facilitate the participation of village students. Uqautchim Uglua will be Iñupiaq-based, steeped in iñupiaq ways of knowing. It will increase the numbers of Iñupiat teachers on the North Slope, leading to BA certification through an indigenous teacher training program.

Ilisagvik was awarded two grants totaling 1.5 million to create Uqautchim Uglua. We began by gathering input from a group of North Slope residents at the Uqautchim Uglua Gathering held on January 20, 2012. A number of people from Barrow, Wainwright, Anaktuvuk Pass and Nuiqsut met to begin making recommendations. Those assembled included certified Iñupiat classroom teachers, current and retired as well as current and retired Iñupiat Language Teachers, parents, elders and administrators. This group offered input in the following four areas.

Parent Support & Empowerment

This group will help develop a parent support and focus group. They recommend:

- Help parents learn Iñupiaq as their children are learning it with hands-on parent/child learning sessions
- Disseminate curriculum and resources via the media

“Today, we have control over our educational system. We must now begin to assess whether or not our school system is truly becoming an Iñupiat school system, reflecting Iñupiat educational philosophies... We must now achieve “professional control” by examining the teacher and content of instruction. We must have teachers who will reflect and transmit our ideals and values. We must have Iñupiat-centered orientation in all areas of instruction.”

—Eben Hopson Sr.
• Provide a point person where parents can call for help—a “Public information Officer” for Iñupiaq
• Develop Iñupiaq Corners at community centers where parents can access Iñupiaq books, TV and media

Next steps: form a parent’s advisory committee, use values and spirituality, develop an Iñupiaq advancement council to promote collaboration and cooperation to create a slope-wide entity agreement

Learning Center Curriculum

This group guides curriculum development for the language nest program. They recommend:

• Required parent participation
• Involve elders, our fluent speakers
• Make sure that the program is community based, using each community’s unique dialect and knowledge system
• Only Iñupiaq should be spoken
• Culturally relevant materials should be developed to teach topics such as kinship, dance, music, art, patterns, values and traditional food
• Iñupiaq media should be utilized

Next steps: share objectives with communities, seek outside support and funding sources beyond grants, develop Iñupiaq, define responsibilities

AA Degree Program

This group will develop the topics, course list and curriculum for the teacher training AA degree program, they recommend the program teach:

• Language through experiential learning, focusing on Native ways of knowing

Next steps: share objectives with communities, seek outside support and funding sources beyond grants, develop Iñupiaq, define responsibilities

Higher Education

This group will identify the four-year partner college or university to and help develop an indigenous teacher certification program. They recommend:

• Define what success looks like from an Iñupiaq perspective
• Develop an Iñupiaq based degree, grounded in the Iñupiaq worldview
• Provide support by involving the family and community
• Implement a college to work force/mentorship
• Design a training piece for professors—a cultural and program orientation
• Use a holistic approach, supporting the emotional and spiritual needs of students

Next steps: identify courses, define qualities important in a partner institution; build alliances with Hawaii and New Zealand who already have Indigenous Education degree