

## Introduction

This book is dedicated to the memory of Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley. Born in Mamterilleq (now known as Bethel), Alaska in 1934, Oscar was raised on the Kuskokwim delta by his non-English-speaking grandmother Matilda Oscar following the death of his parents when he was two. Oscar entered school speaking only his Yup'ik language and spent the first three grades attending a Bureau of Indian Affairs School and went on to become the first Yupiaq to graduate from high school in Bethel and the first to become a certified teacher. His grandmother encouraged him to get a “western” education along with the one he learned as a child in the camps along the rivers of Southwest Alaska but would not allow him to attend a boarding school. His dual education created conflicting values and confusion for him for many years as he sought to find ways in which his peoples’ language and culture could be used in the classroom to meld modern ways to the Yupiaq thought world.

After graduating from high school, Oscar was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Medical Services Corps. He later completed four university degrees, including a B.Ed., M.Ed., and Ed.S from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and a Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia. His 1992 doctoral dissertation examined Yupiaq ways of knowing and was the first there to use an Indigenous methodology of traditional stories and Indigenous ecological knowledge. He published, *A Yupiaq World View: A Pathway to Ecology and Spirit* (now in its second edition), based on his doctoral research. The back cover of this book notes,

Oscar Kawagley is a man of two worlds, walking the sometimes bewildering line between traditional Yupiaq culture and the Westernized Yupiaq life of today. In this study, Kawagley follows both memories of his Yupiaq grandmother, who raised him with the stories of the Bear Woman and respectful knowledge of the reciprocity of nature, and his own education in science as it is taught in Western schools. Kawagley is a man who hears the elders voices in Alaska, knows how to look for the weather and to use the land and its creatures with the most delicate care.

In a call to unite the two parts of his own and modern Yupiaq history, Kawagley proposes a way of teaching that incorporates all ways of knowing available in Yupiaq and Western science. He has traveled a long journey, but it ends where it began, in a fishing camp in southwestern Alaska, a home for his heart and spirit.

He also co-edited with Ray Barnhardt *Sharing Our Pathways: Native Perspective on Education in Alaska* and *Alaska Native Education: Views from Within* and published articles in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *Journal of American Indian Education*, *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, *Anthropology & Education*, and *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*.

Cite as from J. Reyhner, J. Martin, L. Lockard & W.S. Gilbert. (Eds.). (2013). *Honoring Our Children: Culturally Appropriate Approaches for Teaching Indigenous Students* (pp. v-ix). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

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Oscar served for the past 25 years as a faculty member with the Cross-Cultural Studies and Education programs at the University of Alaska Fairbanks where he introduced the construct of “Native ways of knowing” and contributed greatly to the understanding of issues concerning Indigenous peoples and worldviews that had been largely neglected in the past. He also served as co-director of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and on the Alaska Native Science Commission.

While he was an educator and cultural advisor, he also took on roles as an actor in television and films. He played a lead role in a feature-length movie, *Salmonberries*, as well as appearing in episodes of the TV series *Northern Exposure* and the Disney movie, *Brother Bear*. Amongst Alaskan Native people he was seen as father, uncle, friend, leader, teacher, mentor, professor and most recently as “Elder”—the most honored recognition among Native communities. Oscar’s leadership and vision helped his own people to find balance among communities, peoples, and relationships, engaging them in open discussions that challenged them to believe in their abilities and traditions.

In each of these roles he left his mark and received numerous honors over the years, including the National Indian Education Association Lifetime Achievement Award, the American Educational Research Association Outstanding Scholarship Award, the Governor’s Award for the Arts and Humanities, the Alaska Secondary School Principal’s Association Distinguished Service Award, and the Association of Village Council Presidents Award for the years of services to the people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Oscar traveled a long journey, and his lifetime ends where it began as his ashes are spread on the tundra in southwestern Alaska. A eulogy for him recognized that,

Oscar has had, and continues to have, enormous influence on several wider communities and on shaping the work of indigenous science and mathematics education worldwide. The significant impact of his work has been to create a crossroad for Indigenous and Western epistemologies to meet. Indigenous peoples’ worldviews are about integration of spiritual, natural, and human domains of existence and human interaction. The characteristics of this reality include:

- A culturally constructed and responsive technology mediated by nature;
- A culturally based education process constructed around myth, history, observation of nature, animals, plants and their ways of survival;
- Use of natural materials to make tools and art, and the development of appropriate technology for surviving in one’s “place”; and
- The use of thoughtful stories and illustrative examples as a foundation for learning to “live” in a particular environment.

Various overt and covert disruptions of these traditional educational systems have led to personal, psychosocial and spiritual dysfunctions we now see in Indigenous societies. The benefits of “modernity” are

often offset by inefficient housing, disruptions in parent-child relationships, domestic violence, suicides, alcohol/drug abuse and other forms of dysfunctional behavior. With these has come a general sense of powerlessness and loss of control experienced by many Indigenous people. (Archibald, et al., 2007)

Oscar's work to heal these overt and covert disruptions is of value to us all. We were privileged to have Dr. Kawagley keynote the eighth annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium: Merging Tradition and Technology to Revitalize Indigenous Languages held at Northern Arizona University in June 2001. His speech became the lead chapter in *Nurturing Native Languages* published by Northern Arizona University where he wrote, "As we lose our Native languages, more and more of us begin to take part in the misuse and abuse of Nature" (Kawagley, 2003, p. vii).

This is the second monograph published by Northern Arizona University emphasizing culture-based education, which seeks to accomplish the melding of Indigenous and Western knowledge and pedagogy to improve school experiences for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The first book, *Honoring Our Heritage: Culturally Appropriate Approaches for Teaching Indigenous Students* (Reyhner, Gilbert & Lockard, 2011) was dedicated to the memory of Alaskan educator Dr. Bill Demmert (Tlingit/Ogala Lakota) and included nine chapters focusing on various aspects of culture-based education. This current volume begins with adaptations of the keynote speeches by Donna Deyhle and Ray Barnhardt at the Honoring Our Heritage: American Indian Teacher Education Conference held on July 13-14, 2012 at Northern Arizona University. Dr. Deyhle writes in "Listening to Lives: Lessons Learned from American Indian Youth" about what she has learned from three decades working with Navajo children and their families. She describes how teachers' knowledge of the Navajo community has often been framed by negative and limited expectations constrained by racism and what she has learned over the years watching and listening to the educational encounters Navajo youth were experiencing and talking about. Dr. Barnhardt describes in "Indigenous Education Renewal in Rural Alaska" the Alaskan Rural Systematic Initiative that produced a major transformation in Alaskan education over the past 15 years focused on reconciling the conflicting world views, knowledge systems and ways of knowing that have coexisted in Native communities throughout the past century, and he tells how Native people have taken the initiative in redefining the goals and methods of formal education in rural Alaska.

Next, in "Principles of Indigenous Education for Mainstream Teaching" George Ann Gregory examines workable principles of Indigenous education that can be applied to mainstream classrooms: finding each student's gift, professionalism, using real objects and tools, practicums, apprenticeships, elders and older students as teachers, and observation. These principles are illustrated with personal teaching experiences and historical examples. While examining these

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principles, it became apparent to her that they operate best within the context of community and that there may be different types of communities. Then in “Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy for Indigenous Children” Navin Kumar Singh and Jon Reyhner review literature on culture-based education supporting how validating and utilizing Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in schools can improve the education of Indigenous children and provide illustrative examples of how India and the United States have provided some support for the Indigenous educational rights now recognized by the United Nations’ 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In “Diné Youth and Identity in Education” Vincent Werito presents findings from his doctoral dissertation, *The Racialization of Diné (Navajo) Youth in Education*, which tells how nine Diné youth found ways to negotiate their place in school. He explores how schools have historically addressed the cultural and linguistic differences that Diné students bring to school, how culture, language, and race intersect in their lives, and what factors determined success or failure for Diné youth in school.

Following are two chapters describing Canadian efforts to improve First Nations education. In “The Kokum Connection: Reclaiming First Nation Education” Larry Steeves, Sheila Carr-Stewart, and Don Pinay maintain that the Crown’s (Canada’s) treaty commitments to education have not been honored, with disastrous consequences for First Nations people. They then describe the Kokum (“Grandmother” in Cree) Connection that emphasizes family and community involvement in education and focuses on culturally appropriate teaching and learning methods as a means of meeting the treaty commitments to education—and fulfilling the dreams of the First Nations signatories to the treaties. Jonathan Anuik continues the discussion of Canadian First Nations education in “Nourishing the Learning Spirit: Coming To Know and Validating Knowledge: Foundational Insights on *Indian Control of Indian Education* in Canada” where he shares information from the 2007 Banff Dialogue that brought together First Nations educators to discuss the pedagogical and curricular goals outlined in the Canada’s National Indian Brotherhood policy statement *Indian Control of Indian Education* (NIB, 1972).

David W. Sanders in chapter 8, “Exploring the Development of Curriculum Materials for Teaching Mathematics in Lakota,” focuses on some of the findings from his doctoral research on the use of mathematics terminology in his Lakota language and the potential of integrating mathematics and the Lakota language for the creation of mathematics curriculum materials written solely in Lakota. Then Christine K. Lemley, Loren Hudson, and Mikaela P. Terry describe how in a high school-university partnership they implemented an oral history unit to answer the question: “How does oral history value and validate local and community knowledge?” Findings from this project illustrate that an oral history unit can critically enhance student knowledge through community engagement. Finally, in “Using Historic Photographs To Teach about Navajo History and Culture” Evangeline Parsons Yazzie presents historic photographs that can be

used in classrooms to stimulate students to learn about the history and culture of their people, in this case the Diné.

The editors would like to thank Northern Arizona University's Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Center for International Education, Office of the Dean of the College of Education, and the Diné Dual Language Teachers Education Project for their support of the third American Indian Teacher Education Conference that brought together teachers and teacher educators to discuss the topics included in this monograph as well as many other issues related to how the education of Indigenous students can be improved.

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#### **Note**

The editors want to thank Oscar's friend, University of Alaska professor Ray Barnhardt, for some of the biographical information provided in this introduction.

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