Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Cultural Resources Project

History and Highlights

May, 2004 ~ April, 2010

April 15, 2010.
Bordered on the north by the Yukon River, the west by the Bering Straits, in the south is Kuskokwim Bay and to the east the Kuskokwim Valley. Human populations are largely concentrated on the borders of the enormous wetlands and low tundra of the Y-K Delta.
BETHEL, hub for the Y-K Delta, is located 40 miles north of Kuskokwim Bay. The majority of air service for the Delta, both passengers and freight, is funneled through here, as is ocean service for fuel and freight for the Kuskokwim Valley.
Quinhagak Village - 70 air miles south of Bethel - next to the Kanektok River Delta
BASE CAMP FOR THE ECOTOURISM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES IS LOCATED THREE MILES UP-RIVER FROM THE NORTH END OF QUINHAGAK VILLAGE.
Their cultural history and subsistence lifestyles are core to their daily existence.
Our Bethel VISTA volunteer works the crowd in Quinhagak, after sitting in on a presentation to combined Tribal, City & Corporate leaders.
After surveying a majority of households in the village, the birding inventory team was invited to research the area...by land & sea.
Workshops - 2006 ~2007 - small business plan development, Bethel and villages

Bethel cultural center

Chevak
Saturday Markets at Y-K Cutural Center are the focus point for working with the artisans of the Delta region
June, 2007 - Professional birding tour operators, full time birders and a birding photographer took to the field in the Chevak and Hooper Bay area, along the Bering Straits to experience the potential for birding groups and examine the ability of local guides and quality of the infrastructure to accommodate birders.
Presentation in Anchorage to the Qanirtuuq, Inc B.O.D. with Rick Knecht, director of archaeological operations and Ann Riordan, anthropologist, who’s currently recording oral histories with village elders - with a three year schedule to publish a bilingual text, in Yup’ik & English.
K.R.A.’s base camp for ecotourism & archaeology work in the Quinhagak area. From here tourists can sport fish, take eco-tours, and commute to archaeological sites.
The Kanektok River is world famous for it’s salmon and trout fishing - and K.R.A.’s camp is expected to serve as a site to rent camping privileges, or stay in company facilities. including leasing of just boats or boats & guides.
Common subsistence scenery for ecotourism visitors, throughout the Y-K Delta
Currently targeted eco-tourism activities include boat tours of the local waterways, to observe commercial and subsistence fishing activities, or just to enjoy scenery.
For the more energetic eco-tourists, K.R.A. will offer the opportunity to subsistence fish with locals, and then spend time in their fish camps cleaning and drying the results of net fishing. This has been successful in the Bethel area, and other areas of the State - and will increase opportunities for some seasonal income for Y-K villagers.
From January, 2009 through early May, we worked with Warren Jones, and other village leaders in the Y-K region, to develop program outlines & business plans for several small business proposals to compete in the Alaska Federation of Natives’ Marketplace competition. Warren’s efforts won a grant totaling 41K, which provided the seed money for Kanektok River Adventures.
Prior to the 2009 tourism season, Qanirtuup, Inc. wanted to thank the villagers of Quinhagak for their support of K R A - so we had a village cook-out. This lady made her own burger creation!
The archaeological phase of tourism for K.R.A. began in mid-July, 2009 - as Prof Knecht led a beach walk along the eroding bluffs of an old village site, a few miles south of Quinhagak.
From the first visual of the eroding pit site, came this search effort.
The face of the bluff finished, the real work of digging down through frozen permafrost begins - to explore the house pit.
Two Quinhagak brothers enjoying the search process.

There’s a hi-tech learning component involved - for all - a GPS unit that speeds up the site identification, while printing out maps, with very accurate detail.
The fun of digging over for the day - the evenings work of cleaning & identifying is next
Evening visit with villagers at the mess hall/artifact cleaning center - talk over the days efforts.
Warren Jones, business manager of Qanirtuuq, Inc. and the source of creativity and energy behind Quinhagaks efforts at establishing an ecotourism business.

The archaeological team of Scottish highlanders (as you can tell from their colorful costumes) who came to dig and preserve Yup’ik culture--lead by Prof Rick Knecht
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Discovering our Past... Telling our Story