
THE YAKUTAT SPRUCE CHRONICLE



December 18, 2024

Yakutat Schools News

By the Yakutat Middle School

Special Edition: Yakutat Leadership Conference

By: Yakutat & Juneau Middle Schoolers

Speakers

Kim Armendariz

Kim Armendariz came to talk to us about her roles, such as being a Peewee basketball coach, doing The Language Nest, and working on bringing youth and elders throughout Alaska together.



Victoria Demmert

Victoria was the first speaker. She is an Elder in Yakutat. One of her quotes was, “Every day you’re walking toward your future”. She explained what leadership is to her on the first day. She also introduced the whole event to us.



Rhoda Jensen

Rhoda Jensen is Kaagwaantaan from Sitka. She is the new executive director of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe. Rhoda came in to discuss storytelling. She shared the importance of sharing cultural knowledge through stories and how stories can be passed down through generations.

Mayor Bremner

The Mayor of Yakutat, Cindy Bremner, came to the gym to talk to the middle and high school students of Yakutat and Juneau about being a leader and her job. Cindy Bremner has been Mayor since 2012. She said not to give up even if it takes a long time to succeed. This showed us the importance of never giving up, listening, and being responsible to be a leader.



Interviews

*Written by Raven Sheakley and Ava Woodbury
Interviewed by Malena Ollaol and Xavier Ollaol*

Rhoda Jensen

How do you define leadership, and who is a leader to you?

Within our community, leaders are everyone running the city. An example would be someone who is the superintendent of a school. They're the leaders who make decisions in our school. Some of them are hard, and some are easy but it's about trying to keep the flow and keep things moving smoothly. There are many good leaders in our community including Cindy Bremner, Carol Pate, Cynthia Peterson, and Deborah Lekanof.

What future do we want for our community?

I want everyone to have food to eat in their home. It also shouldn't be so hard to get a home, and not be so expensive for gas. We should also take good care of our lands.

What opportunities do we want for our school?

Opportunities would be more classes like art or music. I'm hoping CTE (Career and Technical Education) courses would be an option too.

Victoria Demmert

How do you define leadership, and who is a leader to you?

Someone who is a leader is someone who cares for the people and is willing to do the work. They're willing to be a servant to the people and never betray them or put themselves above them. They are also inclusive.

What future do we want for our community?

We want a community that is inviting, includes everyone, where the community members are safe, have housing, and enjoy one another's company. They have respect for the land, respect for each other, and understand that children are our future and will assist them and help one another to have a happy, healthy life.

What opportunities do we want for our school?

I want the young people to have the opportunities to learn about the trades as they are all equally valuable.

After-School Activities and Fun Memories

Some of us played basketball at the dome, while others were on the swings; the rest of us were by the fire.

We went to the Yakutat High School after 5:30 to eat dinner.

On night 1 Mrs. D made spaghetti for Junior high- High school at the Yakutat school. After dinner, we had a small break and then went to the dome to make s'mores and sing songs. Some people shared songs from our different cultures and regions. And after the dome and and dinner we did NYO until about 9:00.

On the second night, we had enchiladas for dinner, and a Christmas party. We participated in a white elephant gift exchange between the Yakutat and Juneau students. After the gift exchange, we watched *The Polar Express*, played board games, and tried out our new gifts.

“Some things I thought were fun are participating in NYO (Native Youth Olympics).”-JJ from Yakutat

“I liked participating in NYO.” - Maddy from Juneau

“I like experiencing all of the games we did together.” - Dante from Yakutat

“I liked the White Elephant gift exchange because it was something I have never done before.” - Charlie from Juneau

“I liked playing ping pong in the hall with my White Elephant gift. - Xavier from Yakutat

“I enjoyed the Christmas movie last night.” - Damianne from Yakutat

“I liked playing basketball during lunch time.” - Otto from Juneau

“Mr. Ed said try 1% every day and that was helpful.” - Nae from Juneau

“I learned storytelling is not just about a story but it’s about what happens in the story and teaching a lesson to be more successful in the future.” - Dante from Yakutat

“My friends thought it was funny when I kept getting robbed in White Elephant.” - Shaunde from Juneau

“I liked being victorious in Dene Stick Pole game.” - Chris from Yakutat

“I liked playing the leader pose game with Mr. Ed.” - George from Yakutat

“ I like getting a chocolate gift with White Elephant.” - Raiden from Juneau

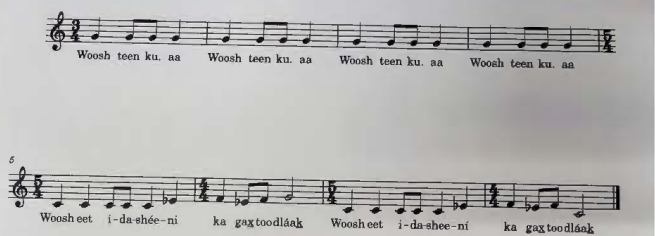
“I liked meeting and learning from Kyle Worl with NYO.” - Greg from Yakutat

Song and Dance Sharing

Written by Malena Ollaol and Aurora Southerland

In the past one and a half days, we have done the YYLC and learned about song and dance from Ed Littlefield. On Monday at the bonfire, he gave us a chance to share our songs and the drum. He told us that some of the songs were originally lullabies and that drums were eventually added somewhere around the 1970s. Before the drums were added, the lullabies were sung softly and calmly. He said the drums were added because the young mothers did not know Tlingit that well so the drums were added to help remember.

Woosh éet idashéeni kagaxhtoodláakh
When you help each other, We can succeed
Ed Littlefield



This was the first song Ed Littlefield had shown us on Monday at the bonfire. This is also the song we all sing together. On Tuesday he also had us as a group, figure out movements for the dance, sort of like dance moves.

For our Facebook Live share out, TCLL shared a song titled Sh Yaa Wudané Tín Yéi Daa Toonei, a song composed with Grandpa David Katzeek, Ed Littlefield and the TCLL 4/5 class in 2019. The other song they shared was Dakl’aweidí clan song composed after the flood when they migrated back to the coast. Yakutat students shared Honey song, a song of the Teikweidí and Eikwei a song of the L’uknax.ádi.



Native Youth Olympics with Kyle

Kyle Worl is the Juneau NYO coach. He goes all over the place to show how to do the games. He told us an NYO tournament is happening in February and April. Here are some of the events in an NYO competition. We practiced some of these with Kyle while he was here with us.

Scissor Broad Jump

The scissor broad jump used to be practiced in case if the ice breaks underneath you, you’d be able to jump further and keep a good balance. You would jump off with both feet, land on one, then jump with the other one behind, jump with the first one, then land on both. You have to stick the landing.

One Foot High Kick

The one-foot-high kick is when you go on both feet and jump, then kick the little ball and land on the same foot you kicked with. You have to hold the landing until you show balance or for three seconds.

Two Foot High Kick

The two-foot high kick is like the one-foot high kick, except when you jump off, you kick with both feet and land with both feet. The rules are that you have to land with both feet and that you have three attempts.

Alaskan High Kick

The Alaskan high kick is an NYO activity where you hold your leg like a flag and the leg that's not straight use your opposite hand to hold it and lift up. Then you kick up with the straight leg and you have to land on it.

Inuit Stick Pull

The Inuit stick pull is a two person stick-pulling game where you have a stick that two people hold. They have two spotters that are by the pullers ankles to prevent them from falling sideways.

Dene stick pull

The Dene stick is when you get a stick that is thick in the middle and slowly gets smaller the further towards the edge. When you play either put lotion or Crisco on the stick and you can't grip over the line until they say to go. Then you try to wiggle it out of your opponents hand.

Seal Hop

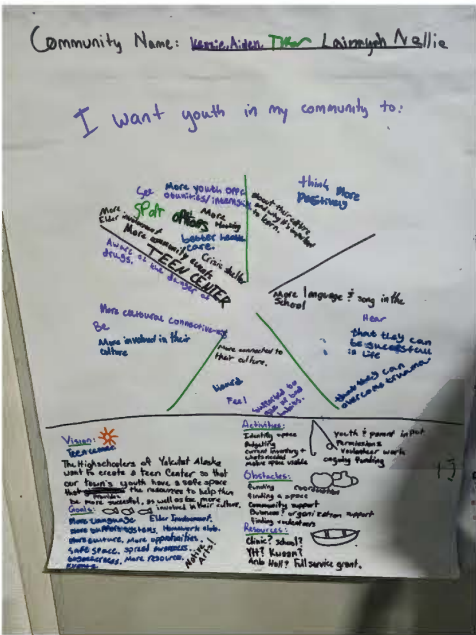
To do the seal hop you have to be in a push-up or plank position and hop on either your knuckles or curled fingers on your palms depending on your grade.



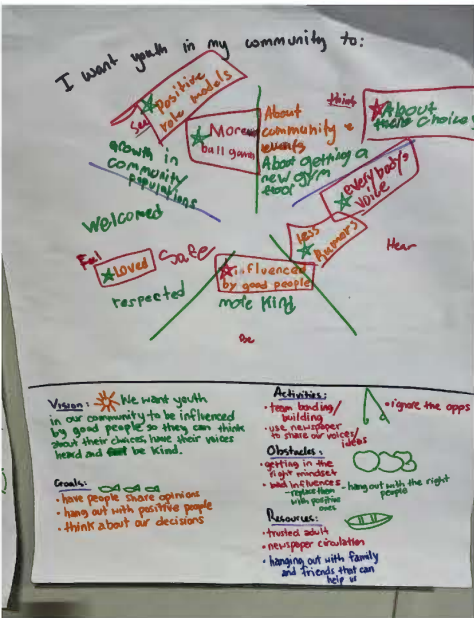
Projects

Written by Gregory Converse and Shaunde Ahshapanek

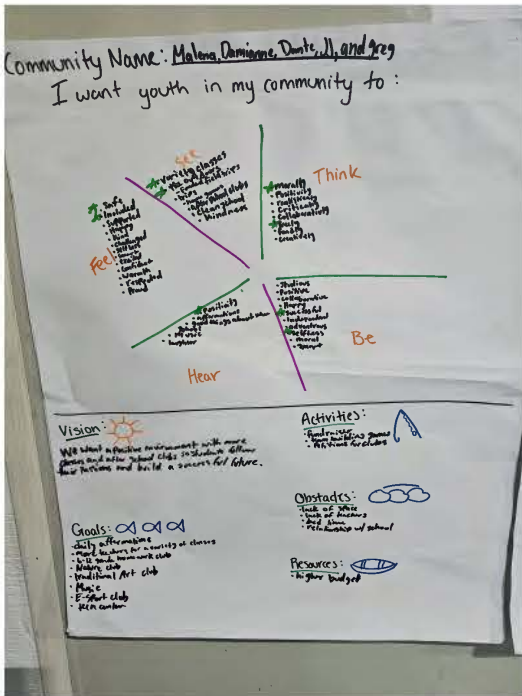
Recently, the TCLL and Yakutat middle/high schools have been working on a list of possible future improvements for our schools. Five different groups made posters presenting some ideas for improvement for both schools. All groups started with the same prompts:” I want the youth in my community to be, feel, hear, think, and see” as well as overall vision, goals, activities, obstacles, and resources available to them.



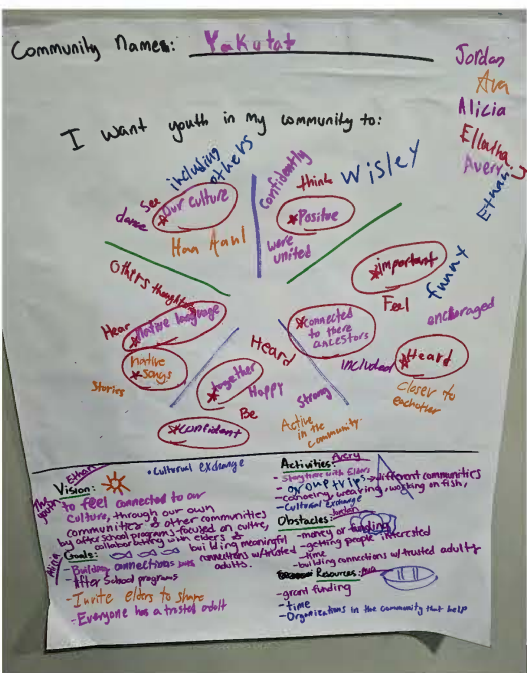
This group's ideas centered around creating a community teen center for the youth. The primary goal was to establish a space where young people could build a successful future and become more engaged with their culture.



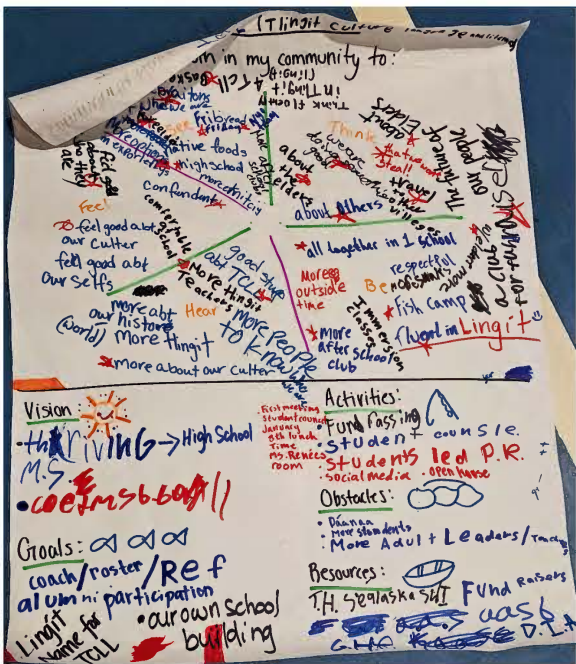
This group's main focus seemed to be giving the youth good influences and making everyone feel respected and welcome, and for people to “ignore the opps”. The group also talked about redoing the gym floor for more basketball home games in the future.



This group felt that they could help build a safe space for the youth in the community through a teen center too. They seemed to put more effort into trying to start a 6th-12th homework club rather than a teen center.



This group seems to want to collaborate more with the Elders in the community. Another focus of this group is being connected to our culture and language along with learning more about how to properly harvest and prepare our local plants and animals.



This was the Juneau group. “Our project focused on creating a thriving middle school that grows into a high school. We want our own school building to stay together and keep learning and speaking Lingít. We also want more opportunities for exploratory and after-school clubs or activities, especially a co-ed basketball team.

Games

This week we have been having lots of fun and learning a lot. We have had students from TCLL, a school in Juneau, come to our school and learn with us. We played many games for fun and to learn more about each other.

NYO Tag

NYO tag is a game like duck duck goose. You lay around a circle with groups of at least 2. If you get tagged you have to try to get them back if they slide back into a group the person at the opposite end has to tag. Its a never ending game.

Me Switch

Me Switch is a game in which somebody is up front trying to get you out. You do poses every time they say switch if you do the same pose as them, you're out. If you are the last one out, it is your turn to be the person who is trying to get people out.

Everybody Is It Freeze Tag

Everybody It Tag is a game of tag where you are all it and if you get tagged you can't move. Anybody can unfreeze you .

Night at the Museum

Night at the museum is a game where there is a big group of people and somebody leaves the room and they wait the people inside do a pose like a statue and if they get caught moving there out.



All My Friends

In All my friends you get in a big circle and somebody stands in the middle. They say, "All my friends __," and they say something that might describe a friend. For example, "All my friends have long hair," and if you have long hair then you move to a new spot. Then it's your turn, then you do it again

Written by George Converse and Raiden Johnson-Katzeek

Storytelling and Leadership

By: Damianne Sheakley and Michaelyn Jackson

We learned about the meaning of storytelling and leadership. We learned that leadership means responsibility and equality to some people.

Miss Alicia, Mr. Ed, and Mrs. Is asked us who we look up to as leaders. Some people named their grandparents, aunties, and uncles, David Kingesti Katzeek and Elizabeth Pertarovich. Someone even mentioned Jackson Wolfe.

Miss. Alicia, Mr. Ed, and Mrs. Israelson wanted us to learn the meaning of leadership. We also learned about leadership and what it means to be a good, responsible leader. Some people thought storytelling was learning different things while being entertained.

Storytelling for some people meant learning new things, sharing information, learning history, listening accessible to anyone, changing, comforting, sharing past experiences/ giving warnings, enjoying scary and mysterious stories, and explaining why things happen. Leadership means to others is, responsibility, giving, wise, encouraging, working together, including everyone, hard work, taking care of others, uplifting, loud voices, selflessness, knowledge, smart, guiding our thinking, fighting for rights, caring, elder wisdom, hearing all sides, and listening when someone has something to say.



Night 2

By Ethan And Charlie

Night 2 Activites

On December 17th at 5:30 after school, there was dinner with the TCLL middle schoolers from Juneau and the kids from Yakutat. They ate enchiladas and salad. Then, they attended the Christmas party where AASB gifted everyone holiday swag. They also did a White Elephant gift swap, watched the Polar Express, and played board games. Lots of candy and cookies were eaten.



Snacks and free lunches

After each activity we ate snacks brought up from Costco. The food was planned by Mrs. Ivers and the staff from the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant from the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). For lunch each day everyone ate sandwiches, chips, and cookies. For snacks every day we had variety of cookies and chips. Everyone enjoyed the food!



NYO

Every day kids had fun participating in the NYO activities. They did plenty of games and had to compete in different stretches and games that took strategy, strength, and balance. The final day we did a tournament. Everyone was given stickers and pins for trying the games and the people who won in this tournament also received a pair of cool, Indigenous snow glasses.

Time with Ed Littlefield

By: Kylie and Maddy

“Who is Ed Littlefield?”

Mr. Ed came to the school and taught our kids about leadership, songs, and dances. Ed also taught us a new song about working together and succeeding. He told us some fun stories and different ways to be a leader. He often comes to the school, and we enjoy having him. We also played cool games with him and made stories too! We wrote stories about what leadership meant to us and different ways to solve problems. After we finished writing them, he had us read to a partner and fix or add more to them. The games he had us play were fun too! We would move in slow motion as if we were in seal oil. After that game, we played an imaginary game where we sculpted out stuff only with our hands and the air. He also did some trick games to teach us that listening to directions and paying good attention is what makes a good leader.

