Fall Venture Article by Ukallaysaaq

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Shareholder Employees Embark on Leadership Program

Five Sitnasuak Shareholder employees recently embarked on the Corporation’s Shareholder Executive Leadership Program. The program is sponsored by Sitnasuak Native Corporation (SNC) and hosted within a Qazgi – an Inupiaq cultural institution for teaching. Our village corporation is implementing the Qazgi in a modern way as a space for meeting, training and sharing. The Qazgi is titled Ubluġiaq or Star to symbolize the leadership development at Sitnasuak that is like reaching for a star as well as guided for direction by a star. The Ubluġiaq Qazgi has four goals for development with each participant: (1) Promote Culturally Grounded in Identity and Values; (2) Support Confident Leadership Abilities; (3) Develop Exceptional Management Skills; and (4) Expand Thoughtful Strategic Planning.

The Ubluġiaq Qazgi is a unique opportunity to work with our next generation to learn and grow individually, professionally and culturally. Our Qazgi supports and develops employees that are shareholders and descendants to be more prepared for leadership – within the Corporation for job effectiveness, within our Businesses and Subsidiaries for customer excellence, and within our Shareholder Base for promoting community and cultural growth. The Ubluġiaq Qazgi spans 2-years with quarterly gatherings for training and discussions. Participants also receive coaching for working on individualized career goals and job leadership skills. Ukallaysaaq, Vice-President of Corporation Affairs, is leading the Qazgi as an experienced facilitator and iḷisautri (trainer or teacher).

Marilyn Koezuna-Irelan, Shareholder Relations Officer, shares “The Ubluġiaq Qazgi for the Shareholder Executive Leadership Program that I and the other participants have been attending is meant to bring leadership ways in all the work we may do. The training we have been provided so far help us to think and re-think challenges that we may face and to face them with determination, and outside the box perspectives. When we work on things to change we should know that we are already knew how to be self-sustaining, and to always be adaptable. The group is also learning to treat individuals as humans and with great care. I believe this was our ancestors way of life before naluaqmiu contact.”

Cara Buie, Escrow Assistant with Mat-Su Title Agency, stated “The first two gatherings during our two year Ubluġiaq Qazgi have been encouraging and inspiring. I’ve expanded my knowledge of our Inupiaq culture and experienced the importance of incorporating our Inupiaq values into the workplace. As participants our four goals for this class are to be culturally grounded in our identity and values, display confident leadership abilities, exercise exceptional management skills and apply thoughtful and strategic planning. I strongly believe the structure of this class will enhance and promote excelling leadership skills in each participant. Our first gathering in Nome involved listening and speaking with Elders and our second gathering in Anchorage included two incredibly motivational guest speakers. Having the opportunity to listen to Elders and guest speakers while reflecting on our own individual experiences to enhance the leadership abilities we all possess has been such a rewarding experience. Not only is this experience rewarding but challenging as well; one of the requirements of this program is to maintain full time employment with Sitnasuak or one of its subsidiary companies. While it can be challenging at times there are also very important leadership skills being enhanced including communication, time management, organization and setting goals.”

Jason Omedelina, Land Technician, shared “It has been a great experience to have the privilege of being able to participate in Ubluġiaq Qazgi for the Shareholder Executive Leadership Program. Ukallaysaaq, has done a great job of incorporating traditional values with modern business practices. Our guest speakers have been very inspiring and motivational. They are great examples of intertwining our corporate values into day to day operations at SNC.”

Dave Evans, Land Manager, gives an introduction and importance of the program, “Hello my name is David Daniel Lee Evans my parents are the late Robert K. Evans and Laura Evans. I have been working for Sitnasuak Native Corporation for eight years. I started working as a Shareholder Register for six years. I am now the Land Manager for the past two years. I joined the Shareholder Executive Leadership Program on June 23, 2014 (first group) and I will be completing the program in February 2018. I am very happy that SNC started this great program – it is an excellent program for our Shareholders who work for SNC to learn and grow for becoming effective leaders.”

Jaqulyn Viner, Assistant Bonanza Express Manager, shares “When I first signed up for the program I had no idea what I was even getting into. I was still learning my job along with everyone’s name at the time. When we had our first gathering I didn’t know what to expect besides to introduce myself and learn about the others who I am taking the training with. But the gathering are simply amazing. We have so many inspiring guest speakers. Getting to know their stories and how they brought peace to their self after all the tragedy that our ancestors has been through. I appreciate the many great things we have shared in our group including getting to know each other as individuals and talking with those who have impacted our community. We have shared how we can help the community in our own ways. We have gotten to meet many people since the first session and it has been an incredible journey. Last but not least, this experience has shown me that we can encourage anyone to do their best. I started out as a retail clerk at Bonanza Express, but now I am an assistant manager. With the right encouragement we can get many people to achieve their goals. Just a little step at a time we can accomplish anything we set our minds to.”

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