

Learning to Listen: Community Collaboration in an Alaska Native Village

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Eight anthropology and museum studies graduate and undergraduate students from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), who were participating in a summer field school, had traveled some four thousand miles to the Sugpiaq/Alutiiq coastal village of Nanwalek, Alaska, to participate in a three-week-long community-based collaborative project. We flew into the village on a Saturday evening in the summer of 2013. Nobody was there to greet us. Although I knew someone would soon arrive, my students were understandably anxious. One, reflecting back on our arrival, wrote, "When we exited the plane and looked to the village we didn't see too many people. No one was walking around or curious to see us just yet. . . . I was worried we would be intruding on the locals; maybe they didn't want us there." My encouragement to go with the flow in an unfamiliar cultural setting could never match their experience of uncertainty. After a while and much to their relief, we were greeted at the airport by our hosts-only to learn that the trail up the mountain to our cabins had been inaccessible all week due to melting snow in the mountains and the resultant mud. We eventually arrived at a solution and headed up the trail in an old pickup truck, escorted by a few four-wheelers.

Before leaving Indianapolis I had met with the students to give them a brief introduction to the culture and history of the region. I reviewed course requirements (keeping a daily field journal, film reviews, participation in nightly group discussions, a final reflective paper) and outlined the rules for the field school, but did not, as they expected, hand them an agenda or syllabus outlining our day-to-day activities. They knew only that they would be helping with the tribal museum and other unspecified projects, which would take shape in response to community needs only after dialogue with community members.

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The day after our arrival we met with tribal staff and community members to plan a potluck. Community members suggested that a potluck was the best way to meet people and get input and direction on the tribal museum project, a crucial first step in identifying priorities for the exhibits and the collection. As these things often go, the community-wide gathering also became a going-away party for one of their beloved school counselors. Some of my students were confused to see a large frosted chocolate cake inscribed "Good Luck Tom!" sitting on the table, but they soon realized that this organic gathering was exactly what we had hoped it would be. Learning that one of my students was celebrating her nineteenth birthday, the entire room, led by the Russian Orthodox priest, sang her a traditional birthday song in the Old Church Slavonic language. Equally exciting was the fact that the local dance group agreed to perform for this going-away, community-input, and now birthday gathering. They danced and sang in their Sugpiaq/Alutiiq language. Several of us were invited to join them, and one of my students received loud applause when he, too, flapped his wings and loudly squawked like a giant seagull during the well-loved seagull dance. This was an unbelievably warm welcome and positive start.

The students happily took it all for granted, but I knew how much pre-planning preceded this welcome. With the guidance of a friend and collaborator, she herself a community member and teacher in the local village school, we spent the better part of a year discussing and organizing the field school. I wanted my students to get experience living and working in another culture, and we both wanted the work they did to be meaningful to the community. Multiple discussions about community needs with both individual community members and representatives of the Nanwalek IRA Council, the tribal government of the Native Village of Nanwalek, gave us a starting point.

Having previously worked in the community on multiple environmental and cultural heritage projects with several different families and individual community members, I had already established rapport. These projects, spanning more than a decade, ranged from water quality trainings from the Environmental Protection Agency and tribal marine science workshops with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to a digital language preservation project to a cultural undertaking that sought to

document the knowledge elders held regarding the traditional methods of harvesting seagull eggs. I had also served as a consultant in the development of traveling culture kits for Chugachmiut, a Native corporation formed under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and self-described as a tribal consortium created to promote self-determination in the seven Native communities of the Chugach Region. My previous work and appropriate behavior paved the way for my students, but it would still be up to them to demonstrate their own abilities to work collaboratively. This was a salient point in both the preparatory and on-site discussions with my students, who were not, as Menzies and Butler (2011: 176) put it in their discussion of their own field school, "directly involved with all the various levels of discussions and negotiations required to set the field school in place."

All this preparation was part of a careful effort to forge a better and more mutual relationship with Nanwalek than those the community typically has with representatives of nonlocal institutions. To understand this, some contemporary social context and history is in order. The Native village of Nanwalek is situated on the southwestern coast of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, and the Indigenous people of the region refer to themselves as Sugpiaq, meaning "real people." As the village's earliest name, Alexandrovsk, indicates, the region was colonized in the Russian period, when many Russian traditions were introduced. In particular, Russian Orthodoxy remains deeply rooted in the Native communities. In a discussion of the region's complex history, Chugachmiut states that "the present-day prominence of the Russian Orthodox Church and of 'Russian' surnames are evidence of the impact that early Russian explorers, fur traders, and clergy had on this area" (Chugachmiut 2016).

Today Nanwalek (also previously known as English Bay) is a village of less than 200 community members, "off the road system"-approximately 200 miles from Anchorage-and accessible only by boat or plane, and then only on days of calm weather. Typically, "outsiders" who come to Nanwalek, as is true for other Alaska Native villages, spend only short periods of time there and are focused on instrumental bureaucratic ends, a practice colloquially known as "fly in, fly out." They come to implement government

regulations, seek information for various kinds of record keeping, or provide social, educational, or medical services.

As might be expected, rural Alaska poses a number of challenges to young inexperienced field school students. Others have written about the difficulties students face when learning firsthand what we have taught them in theory in the confines of the university classroom (see Menzies and Butler 2011; Hyatt 2011). Many of our day-to-day obstacles were typical ones that anthropologists experience, particularly those going into the field for the first time. This includes life without electricity, running water (or safe drinking water), and flushing toilets.

My students were met with these and many other obstacles. It was difficult to get our gear and supplies up to the camp in the mud; we were further frustrated by the fact that our refrigerator was powered by a gas generator that soon ran out of fuel. We lost a lot of our food in the first week and significantly modified the menu for weeks two and three. One student wrote in her field notes that "there were a lot of challenges to fieldwork that you don't really think about like . . . getting there and . . . where do we get our food, etc" Of course, students also had to adjust to twenty-four hours of daylight during the month of June. They had to get used to hiking between the camp and the village in groups of "four or more," a frustration for young adults who were accustomed to setting their own schedules-and a necessity in bear country.

Prior to our arrival the locals had warned me that the river was high due to late snow melt-off in the nearby mountains. Monday was our "trial run" of the trail, which was still extremely rough from the long winter snows. While we hiked between tire ruts that were more than a foot and half deep in places, the students talked about the weather, affording me one of many teaching moments. I cautioned them not to speak about the weather casually. As in other cultures related to that of the Sugpiaq/ Alutiiq people (such as the Yup'ik and Inupiaq), concepts of "weather" entail much more than mere notions of climate.

Weather is thought to possess the same kind of sentient awareness as do beings in the spirit world; therefore, people are taught at a young age not to speak poorly of the weather or be too confident in predicting it, because it is considered disrespectful and potentially dangerous. For people coming from a

society where "weather talk" is commonplace, this can be a slow lesson to internalize and put into practice, and one I could not have taught as effectively in the classroom setting.

When we got to the river we were instructed to walk the "crest," a formation in the riverbed where water pooled before cascading back into deeper pools. My students, determined to make this work, ventured out in various directions. Many got soaked, and I quickly started thinking about "plan B." In the end community members, who were already doing fish counts at the place where we crossed, offered to drive us by fourwheeler across and back each day. Toward the end of the field school I gave each of them a small honorarium in appreciation of their assistance. We also left many of our unopened dry goods with them to share with their families, a gesture that was warmly accepted. The students and the community arrived at a mutually responsive resolution to the problem, as we would for many others, but my students also learned that living and working in unfamiliar places means that one's incompetence and inability to solve seemingly simple day-to-day tasks is humbling at best. This immersion in and dependency on the community served to equalize the consultant-community relationship. You cannot see yourself as "the selfimportant expert" when faced with your own ignorance.

The students began to fall into the practice of taking their direction from community members, while at the same time noting tasks that might need doing. We cleaned out a large storage shed to make room for the miscellaneous, non-collections pieces that were stockpiled in what was designated to be the collections storage room for the museum. The students were tasked with moving things like a wheel-less Ping-Pong table belonging to the local school district, while they were forbidden to remove other boxes that belonged to the church group (decorations for Christmas, extra boxes of altar candles and church linens). A menagerie of broken tools, water-testing kits, damaged camping gear, and even car parts were hauled off-site, parade-like, to another storage shed or were taken to the dump with tribal staff approval. Students worked slowly and cautiously to clear what would become the new collections storage space for the tribal museum.

Locals explained that in coastal communities that had been impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the monetary settlement among the State of Alaska, the United States government, and Exxon had facilitated the development of museums and cultural centers. The Exxon Valdez disaster looms large in Nanwalek history. The tanker ran aground on March 24, 1989, leaving in its wake a devastating and lasting impact on these communities who rely so heavily upon the rich subsistence foods provided by the sea. In some cases entire shifts in dietary practices were necessary as species dwindled (Salomon et al. 2011). The consequences of the spill altered life for Native people in terms of cultural traditions and psychosocial well-being. From the neighboring Suqpiq/Alutiiq village of Port Graham, well-respected community elder and chief Walter Meganack shared this haunting sentiment at the 1989 Citizens Commission Hearings held in Anchorage, Alaska:

The excitement of the season had just begun, and then, we heard the news, oil in the water, lots of oil killing lots of water. It is too shocking to understand. Never in the millennium of our tradition have we thought it possible for the water to die, but it is true.

. . . What we see now is death, death not of each other, but of a source of life, the water. We will need much help, much listening in order to live through the long barren season of dead water, a longer winter than ever before. (National Wildlife Federation 1990)

The consequent ordeal caused by the oil spill, like other stories of historical trauma, lives in the collective memory of the community.

In the process of cleaning up the crude oil spill rock by rock, hundreds of artifacts, mostly lithic material, were discovered by workers on the beaches. The need to identify and find safe storage for these objects stimulated support for local repositories, such as the Nanwalek Tribal Museum. Such finds made up only a part of the museum's collection of several hundred objects, which included everything from historic Russian Orthodox Church icon paintings, historic photographs, church documents, rare books, contemporary art, and glass trade beads to archaeological lithic material. The students, although they had

never quite faced a collections conundrum of this magnitude, assisted community members in the creation of an inventory list. This task alone took eight students almost a week to complete. Even more challenging were the questions-what constitutes a collection and what they should record? The old Russian Orthodox church building had been abandoned in the 1970s. At some later point concerned community members went into the old building with banker boxes and scooped up everything, including bits of charred wood, rusted nails, soiled or rotting textiles, and broken glass. Recognizing that not everything should be treated as an object in the community collection, students struggled with how to treat these random and, perhaps, unwanted objects. We had many discussions with community members about this issue as we worked to develop a comprehensive inventory for the museum collection. Students reflected on these experiences in their field notes. One commented: "We learned today to avoid the 'top down' approach to doing community work."

Students had been assigned an article by Kiowa author Joan Thomas, who urged readers to find out as much as possible about an object's origins. "Even if you know only the general area or cultural group from which a particular object originates, this will give you a better idea of how to interact with it" (Thomas 2004: 8). In this vein, my students got quite a chuckle the day I summoned the community priest to come over to the museum to advise me on some of the items that had been recovered from the church. Upon his arrival, I took him to a large white bucket of burnt candles and asked how they should be handled and stored. He laughed and said, "They need to go to the dump, they're just burnt candles." This encounter, met with humor on all sides, still demonstrated for my students something rather significant about the process of doing truly collaborative work. Collaboration means not only that we share decision making but also that we consciously avoid making assumptions about how things should be done. We might have guessed that the burnt candles were nothing more than intended trash. But might they have been set aside for special care following specific religious or cultural protocols? Only the local priest would know.

This simple lesson, reinforced many times during the course of the project, was fundamental. Focusing on the objects already displayed by community members, my students were divided into teams, each tasked with cleaning the objects in their designated exhibition space while also monitoring those spaces for various potential agents of deterioration (high light levels, high temperature, low relative humidity, and potential risk from pests). When students discovered that a Russian Orthodox cross was displayed in an area where light levels far exceeded the recommended, allowable levels for long-term preservation, they asked what they should do. I instructed them to consult with the tribal administrator. Knowing that there are many purposes for object placement and that an object's most important role may not be to see it far into the future, but rather to just see it, I offered a few suggestions for resolving the issue (remove it from the exhibit, relocate the object, alter light conditions, or elect to leave it in place). The tribal administrator selected a new placement for the object where it would be exposed to less light.

This consultative approach resonates with a much larger way of thinking about museums and museum objects, in this context honoring the choices made by the Indigenous community curators. It is an approach that differs from typical museum best practices, which privilege the physical care of the objects. Writing of "Indigenous curation," Marilena Alivizatou (2012: 21) brings into focus the key point that "the preservation and interpretation of Indigenous collections by Indigenous peoples, emerges therefore as an expression of intangible heritage, which ultimately liberates culture from the oppressive, exclusive, and authoritarian articulations of Western museology" (also see Stanley 1998; Kreps 2009).

As students did all this work, community members began to show their appreciation by offering our group fish. The salmon were literally swimming in the net one hour and on our grill the next. People also shared dried and salted fish that had been carefully prepared for the long winter ahead. My students returned from grocery runs or the laundromat with bags of fish in hand, having encountered various community members. I reminded them that there could be no greater gift or sign of acceptance. I was thinking: this is how you know you are involved in meaningful collaboration! One undergraduate student wrote in her fieldnotes: "We were very careful to demonstrate respectful treatment of not only the objects

in the collection but of cultural practices. I am confident that our treatment of the museum [objects] in this manner was received gratefully by the community because of the outpouring of responses that we received. The most rewarding part of our work was the outward gestures of fish given to us almost daily and the several potlucks and dances hosted for us. Sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious, their welcoming reception and thankful gestures made our work meaningful."

My students and I had been working in the tribal museum for less than a week when two agency representatives arrived on the Smokey Bay Air morning flight. We had been told by people in the tribal office that they were coming to the village for the purpose of conducting museum work, as a part of the community outreach function of the oil spill settlement. They made clear that they needed to work quickly to accomplish their goals since they were departing that same evening. One of the two was charged with giving overall recommendations for the care of the collection, while the other had been sent to advise on the museum's exhibitions. Seeing this as an important learning opportunity, I arranged to have my students assist them in the museum. They directed my students to remove the objects in the exhibit cases for the purposes of cleaning. They were then instructed to reorder and replace the objects chronologically beginning with the oldest archaeological lithic material, followed by trade beads, Russian Orthodox icon painting and other religious sacred objects, and finally, to end the "story" with contemporary artworks that had been created by community members. This chronological approach reflects a very Western way of representing the past, one that is often counter to the way Indigenous communities interpret their own history.

Although I had been informed by members of the tribal council that these consultants would be in the village to work in the museum, I did not anticipate the stark differences in how we would approach the same project. Concerned over the lack of community involvement in these decisions, my students hesitated to comply. Instead, they located me and informed me of their concerns. I instructed them to remove each object carefully for cleaning, but to note its original placement, in order to ensure its proper return within the exhibit case. Knowing that the community had ordered the exhibition according to their

own criteria meant that our job was to honor and maintain their order whether it seemed logical to us or not. At the end of the day the two consultants boarded the small six-passenger plane. Still at the museum, we watched the plane fly back over the mountain and out of sight. That evening, my students and I discussed how the agency representatives had unintentionally reinforced well-worn patterns of colonialism, patterns in which outsiders make the decisions regarding allocation of funds, acquisition of supplies, and control over content.

The very next day several women from the community arrived at the museum early to greet us. They walked around the museum, taking note of the objects and commenting on how good they looked after the cleaning. As they made their way toward the door one said, "We thought that you were going to come in and move our stuff and we spent a lot of time deciding where to put things and how to display them" (in CusackMcVeigh fieldnotes 2012). They were pleased that we had honored their choices for placement but were also very discouraged by the news that the community would have no say in how the funds for caring for the collection were spent. Their priority, for example, was to purchase metal shelving to house the many objects not on display, but they had been told that the funds were already allocated for the purchase of tools and other supplies for making exhibits.

By this time my students had settled into their daily routine in the tribal museum. On an uncharacteristically beautiful June day, with the fish running and community members busy putting up salmon for the coming winter, something went wrong. News spread quickly in the village. A floatplane had crashed into Second Lake. Fortunately the pilot had escaped without serious injury, but the plane was floating upside down and moving closer to shore with the increasing afternoon winds. There was a strong threat that once the plane's fuselage hit bottom, its fuel tank would rupture, spilling gallons of fuel into the freshwater tributary where the salmon returned to spawn each year. The tribal council office was abuzz with a flurry of activities and phone calls to outside agencies. Community members, many of whom had lived through the Exxon Valdez oil spill and continue to live with its impact today, were ready to take action. My students were busy working away in the museum at their assigned tasks when a friend in the

traditional council office mentioned that people were pitching in to help. This subtle suggestion prompted me to return to the museum announcing a "change of plans" A look of confusion followed as I announced that the community needed everyone they could get to right that plane before it hit the shore, cracked its fuel tank and contaminated the lake. Without hesitation, they secured the collections, relocked exhibit cases, and were headed back up the trail. As they joined community members on the two-mile hike up to Second Lake, they understood what was at stake. The lake was a key spawning area for the thousands and thousands of salmon that make their way back to the village each year, putting much needed food on tables of local families throughout the year to come. In the end the students did little to help actually secure or remove the plane that threatened the health of the watershed and salmon, but they demonstrated an ability to respond appropriately to community needs. What mattered was that they were there and ready to help. What mattered to community members too was that the students understood the importance of subsistence activities and the strong reliance on fish, here as in many other coastal communities throughout Alaska (Hensel 1996).

There could have been no better way to teach this applied anthropological lesson that what matters most in the work we do is what matters most to the community, and that you only gain these understandings by spending time in the community and learning how to listen to what people say about what matters. Early in the planning stages for this field school, there had been reluctance from some council members who were uncertain about hosting a large group of outsiders, but this single event cemented a genuine partnership.

In the weeks that followed, the community engaged the students in many projects and gatherings far beyond the walls of the museum. As trust built, some students were invited to work side-by-side with community youth to help organize the community library in the newly built youth center, while others, following the suggestion of the local Russian Orthodox priest, helped community youth paint fence posts for their village cemetery. Community members reciprocated by hosting potlucks, throwing birthday parties, teaching students to weave grass baskets, sharing their stories, teaching students how to cut fish-a

highly valued skill acquired over time (see Hensel 1996), and by sharing with us an endless supply of much prized fish. Reflecting back on this community-based, collaborative project, one Nanwalek community member stated that the community had "welcomed them (my students) far beyond the job of the museum!" (in Cusack-McVeigh fieldnotes 2012).

Beyond the Field School: Paths to Successful Collaboration

These descriptions of the Nanwalek field school experience have highlighted some important aspects of good collaboration, including the time required to build trusting relationships, learning how to take direction and suggestions from community members, sharing decision making, and avoiding assumptions. These all touch on broad issues that bear some more explicit discussion. A few key issues are considered here.

CULTURE IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE "SPRINKLED" INTO A PROJECT

During a visit to a neighboring Sugpiaq/Alutiiq village several years earlier, I once overheard a NOAA marine biologist say to another younger researcher, "If you want to get that NSF funding just sprinkle in a little TEK!" Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and traditional knowledge (TK) have become well-worn acronyms in Alaska, where researchers of all kinds work in or around Native communities. The phrase is also in common use among Alaska's Indigenous communities, particularly in the context of local water quality and environmental monitoring programs. But I was horrified at the suggestion that a "pinch" of culture could be added to a research project to ensure success, the way one might add a secret ingredient to a favorite family recipe. Similarly, museums have a long history of "sprinkling" culture into their exhibitions and public programming. What cannot be sprinkled in are the deep cultural values and beliefs that actually guide behavior and shape worldview. As a cultural anthropologist who has spent decades living and working in Indigenous communities, I regularly encourage my students to explore the relationships of power and authority that are inherent in collaborations of all sorts. Indigenous communities, once historically marginalized, now have a strong voice in the museum world and the ways

in which their culture and history are portrayed (see Zimmerman 2010; Alivizatou 2012; Atalay 2012; Lonetree 2012). We need to ensure that our research is truly collaborative in nature and, more important, to teach our students to recognize the difference between meaningful collaborations and this external "sprinkling" of Indigenous culture and beliefs into community projects.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE COMMUNITY?

Engaging local communities as collaborators holds great potential but also brings with it additional challenges often not met in a "traditional" research setting. What tends to be glossed over are the tough questions of internal representation and voice. Simply put, *who* speaks for "the community"? As anthropologists, we try to avoid representing communities as homogeneous.

There are paths we can follow that will increase the likelihood of successful collaboration in the context of community diversity and changing local power dynamics. Most essential is the ability to establish a long- term presence in the community and gain the respect of a broad representation of community members. That is key because the more trust there is, the more diverse opinions we are likely to hear and hear about- and there also will be more people who will stand up for us and the partnership if a dissenting faction or individuals object to our presence or actions. Ultimately, we must acknowledge the fact that what works in one cultural group or at one time may not be well received or successful in another. Such issues can only be addressed through responsive collaboration, which involves ongoing dialogue and a continued willingness to listen.

IT IS BETTER NOT TO OVER-SPECIFY

In a blog post to the Center for a Public Anthropology website, Robert Borofsky offers a pointed critique: "Public anthropology sounds engaging and dynamic without specifying important details as to who, what, how, or why" (Borofsky 2011). I have decided that specifying such details is actually somewhat counter to my approach. As part of sound methodology, we actually refrain from asking questions of who, what, how, or why. It is instead the very community where we are working who define, through their own

processes, these essential aspects of any successful project. This does not mean denying one's professional expertise or giving up on the necessity of an organized approach to, say, dealing with a museum collection. It means sharing my expertise in ways that the community welcomes, when and where the community can use it; recognizing that the community's forms of planning or organizing actions may reflect different cultural practices and preferences; and realizing that methods are likely to evolve, selectively taking advantage of the skills and ideas of the collaborative partners.

INVOLVEMENT IN A COMMUNITY TRUMPS ACADEMIC NITPICKING

Cognizant of the ongoing debate within my own field about the boundaries between community engagement, collaborative research, public scholarship, and doing public anthropology, I have struggled to define this fieldwork/field school experience that I developed for my students back in 2013. But as a guiding precept, "The more inclusive we are and the less time we spend defining terms and drawing boundaries, the more likely more of our colleagues are to join us. Our students will also come to realize that they are part of a greater endeavor" (Lamphere 2004: 432). Like Louise Lamphere, Luke Eric Lassiter also suggests we might best serve our students by "moving past the debates and arguments concerning public anthropology and how students can realize public engagement via collaborative research (i.e., between and among researchers and local communities of collaborators)" (Lassiter 2008: 70). We can largely get past those debates by simply getting students involved in responsive community collaboration (regardless of how it is labeled) as an essential component of doing good anthropology and becoming good anthropologists. In his field journal, one of my anthropology students reflected that the value of his experience in Alaska was "to be part of things I had only read about in anthropological writings, and utilize the methods of ethnography that I have learned"

ENTERING THE CONTACT ZONE

On our very first day in the village I had assigned an essay by Alaskan anthropologist Phyllis Morrow (1992) titled "What Drives the Birds? Molting Ducks, Freshman Essays, and Cultural Logic." In this

essay Morrow (1992: 58) writes, "I see more and more ways that each culture's assumptions about the way life 'ought to be organized' create disorganization cross-culturally." For my students this was a point of entry to think about disjunctions between local and outside perspectives. It led them to think about how outside experts may be oblivious to local needs and desires and may act to override them. James Clifford, in writing about the roles of various Native American groups in museums throughout North America, has referred to the museum as a "contact zone" (Clifford 1997), but I wonder whether he envisioned community tribal museums as a stage for interactions like the one described here. Following Clifford, scholars examine "museums as places of contentious and collaborative relations and interactions" (Schorch 2013: 68). The Nanwalek Tribal Museum, like its much larger counterparts, also became a "site of conflict and negotiation" (Alivizatou 2012: 17). This was the most valuable lesson of all for my students in the summer field school. Those agency representatives were well-intentioned, but they made mistakes that are deeply rooted in the historic past. And the mistakes were not only tolerated by local community members; sadly, they were expected as a routine part of doing any kind of project with outside agencies. In spite of the challenges, collaborative research and community-based projects are the best way to encourage critical thinking in our students, who in turn will begin to recognize the inherent power relationships that routinely characterize the said "partnerships." My students learned, firsthand, a valuable lesson about power relations in community-based work and how thinly disguised control can be in such endeavors.

Conclusions

Will this field school experience and participation in a community-based project really have an impact on how my students conduct their own future research or behave in a museum context? Will they shape projects with the input and guidance of community members or, in response to external pressures, arrive with a fully predetermined agenda? Time will tell, but what is certain is they learned to live and work respectfully in another community. They learned that the most meaningful projects are indeed those generated "with, by, and for" community members (Atalay 2012). One undergraduate anthropology

student noted in his journal: "We were not in their village to 'change' or 'fix' their museum, but to learn from them and incorporate the cultural values that they find important into their museum." More important, in an e-mail message to the author on December 15, 2013, a Nanwalek community member wrote, "This was truly a unique project in many ways, but most importantly because Nanwalek . . . guided the project to reflect our community."

Anthropologists are in a unique position to facilitate collaborations between community members and outside institutions in issues of voice and issues of representation. We have the tools to recognize and understand these ongoing tensions. Those tools, after all, are key components of the ethnographic endeavor. Field schools and collaborative research projects such as this one not only forge new ways of working together but also guide the next generation, who will have learned the process of community-based work in real settings, learning how to share and give up decision-making power as a routine part of doing good research. And as other scholars have argued, our students are better served by focusing less on questions of whether their work is applied, public, practicing, or academic anthropology and more on the larger questions central to our field. Field schools and research projects that are born out of responsive collaboration encourage the next generation of scholars to chart, "as anthropologists, how best to connect with the central questions and problems of a larger anthropological project" (Lamphere 2004: 432). In the end my students gained tremendous insights and the skills necessary to be leaders in our field.

Two days before our scheduled departure, with the community exhibit installed, we were still working furiously to complete the inventory and identify the location of each object for future use. The tribal administrator came into the museum and announced that the community wanted to throw another potluck, this time to thank us for all the hard work we had done over the past few weeks. I was surprised but pleased. My students had worked very hard to make a real difference, and there was no greater sign of approval for a job well done. Community members again freely shared their salmon, fish eggs, and even their much coveted seal oil. After we finished eating, the tribal council chief stood up and announced that he had some awards to hand out. One by one my students and I were called up to receive certificates of

appreciation. With a handshake and a nod, he thanked each student personally. Noting some cultural differences between Alutiiq and Western ways of acknowledging the contributions of others, he stated, "We don't usually express these things with words" Afterward the community dance group leader acknowledged our seagull dancer for his special talents. In closing, the tribal chief left my students with a few parting words, stating that "we don't always say a lot with words, but we are very grateful." It was really quite a remarkable sign of acceptance and having done things the right way, an honor understood by all.

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Fig. 1. Alaska “bush flying.”



Fig. 2. Mentoring community youth.