Fab Lab in Unalakleet

By Reid Tulloch

This year is an exciting year for Unalakleet Schools. Maker-spaces have been gaining popularity all over the country and Unalakleet now has one of its own. It's called the Fab Lab for Fabrication Laboratory. This semester in Unalakleet, Mr. Tulloch has 13 students in his FabLab classes. The students are planning on developing their problem solving, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and creative skills all at once.

First off, students are learning a new operating system going from OS X to Windows. Then they are learning a design software that many companies and engineers worldwide use. But the fun stuff is when they get to make their designs. Machines they will be able to use that talk to the computer include a laser cutter/engraver, Vinyl cutter (For signs, sticker graphics, garment logos), a 3d Printer, and a CNC router.

Many of the items they will be designing and making will be for customers, which is where entrepreneurship comes in with a business model. It will be exciting what comes out of the Unalakleet FabLab!
BSSD Welcomes

White Mountain

Shaktoolik

Wales

Gambell

Unalakleet

Golovin

St. Michael
Students from Alaska met with Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) during a panel presentation.

The Native Villages of Gambell and St. Michael were a handful of tribes from the Bering Strait School District selected to participate in the 2016 National Native Youth Summit in Washington D.C., from September 24th through the 27th.

Teams of four tribal youth, spent three days learning about building community and developing leadership skills. Students gained training to become Native Youth Ambassadors to implement community development projects upon their return home. While in Washington D.C., these leaders toured national monuments and learned about federal Indian Policy, met with key staff at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, such as Secretary Julian Castro and Deputy Secretary Lourdes Ramirez, conducted a neighborhood community inventory as well as met with U.S. Senators Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski.

I’ve lived in Alaska since 2003, and love everything about this place, including the animals that inhabit some of the most remote and wild parts of the state. In addition to research, I love getting out there and telling other people about how amazing this place is, and how awesome seabirds are! Seriously, they are awesome, they can tell us so much about the health of the ocean, including just how serious an issue plastic marine debris is for the ocean environment.

I love sharing their story with everyone, because I think we can somehow give the world wings and take flight as we learn more about the health of seabirds. I have visited K-12 classrooms in Anchorage, Chugiak, Eagle River, Palmer, Wasilla, Talkeetna, Houston, Cordova, Stika, Soldotna, Fairbanks, North Pole, Wrangell Island, Unalaska, St. Paul, and Naknek to inform students about the global issue of marine debris and to promote environmental stewardship, with the hopes of visiting more communities and returning to some locations to catch up with folks and hear about all the wonderful things that have been happening! Some of the biggest news that I’ve recently heard is that Cordova will ban plastic bags and Styrofoam at the start of October 2016, a measure that passed thanks to the tireless work of folks at the Eyak Preservation Council.

The Arctic in the Classroom

By Veronica Padula

Perhaps I’ll start this with an introduction, since I am a new visitor to the Bering Strait School District. My name is Veronica Padula. I’m currently working on my PhD at the University of Alaska Anchorage/Fairbanks. I investigate how plastic marine debris impacts seabirds in the Bering Sea. I am motivated to do this type of research because plastic debris is choking our ocean ecosystems, including the Bering Sea. In this region, the seabirds and their prey mistake plastics for food, resulting in exposure to harmful plastic-associated chemicals like phthalates. We do not know the extent of phthalate exposure nor their effects on seabird health. My research aims to build knowledge of phthalate exposure in Bering Sea seabirds to understand effects on reproduction, survival, and ecosystem health.
As I am writing this, my time in Savoonga is almost coming to a close, which allows me an opportunity to catch everyone up on how things are going! So far the 9th and 11th graders have been out to the beach down the road from the school to pick up debris. Weather cooperated the first day we went out with the 9th graders, perhaps making the experience a bit more enjoyable, but beach cleanups with students marched on, even on windier days! The 11th graders were troopers on a very windy day and actually managed to get a ton of styrofoam bits and pieces off the hill above the beach in a very short time - they counted 50 pieces of styrofoam actually! One of the 11th graders, Vadim, found an interesting piece of debris - a plastic cup with Russian markings! I sent a picture of the cup to my adviser in Anchorage, Doug. He said he would try to find a friend who could translate the words for me. I’ll follow up if someone figures out what it says.

However, the job is not over once the debris has been picked up. Once back in the classroom, students need to count and categorize the marine debris they collected. The larger categories include plastic, metal, paper, glass, and fishing gear, with subcategories listed under each of these. For example, the plastic category has many subcategories, including plastic bags, foam fragments, straws, etc. As the students count and categorize, the information they gather is entered into the marine debris tracking app, where folks from lots of other parts of the US and a few other parts of the world are also entering information about the marine debris they’ve been collecting. So far, the high schoolers have logged 244 items collected during their first marine debris cleanup trips! It was the first point on the tracker’s map for Alaska, which was really exciting for the students! That information has also been placed on social media such as twitter, where people from all parts of the world can see the amazing work Savoonga students are doing!

Many of the items students collected were plastic, with foam pieces making up a large proportion. I pointed out to students just how small those pieces of Styrofoam can get, and asked them to consider what those small pieces of plastic might look like to animals like fish and birds. They suggested those little pieces might look like food to animals, and I pointed out that people have found evidence of ocean animals eating Styrofoam again and again around the world. In no time the students began to understand that eating plastic is not healthy for animals, especially animals they may harvest, because plastic does not provide nutrition to animals, nor does it allow them the opportunity to fatten up for longer winters. If you are planning to hunt these animals eating Styrofoam again and again around the world. 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The 10th graders will go out to collect marine debris at the beginning of this coming week. The job of cleaning up debris might seem never-ending, but hopefully students can remember that with each visit to the beach, with each piece of trash they pick up from the ground and place into the garbage bag, and with each piece of information they enter into the marine debris tracking app, they are taking care of their community, Savoonga, and the animals that live in it. On top of that, they are taking care of the planet by taking care of the place they call home, and they are part of a worldwide community of human beings caring for the earth and keeping it healthy for generations to come.

Students in third and fourth grade at Paul F. Asicksik, Sr. School have spent the week studying about archaeology. After spending time on a field trip learning about what archaeologists do and what they are finding in the village, students began a week long unit led by their student teacher, Audrey Matthews. Students learned the difference between an ecofact and an artifact. Students found small items on the beach which were then baked into a cupcake. Each child was given two toothpicks in order to “excavate” their site. Students were excited as they found their ecofact.

The Pirates of Shaktoolik!

By Lynda Bekoalok

We are pirates this year! We have a class code of conduct for our ship that our crew abides by. We are a ship load of pirates this year venturing on the open seas. On our ship we are a crew. We respect each other. We take risks. We learn from our mistakes.

We try our best. We dream BIG! and we celebrate each other’s success! This is the motto of our ship. We plan to withstand rough seas and enjoy the calm waters of learning this year. Join us for our journey.

Students in third and fourth grade at Paul F. Asicksik, Sr. School in Shaktoolik have spent the week studying about archaeology. After spending time on a field trip learning about what archaeologists do and what they are finding in the village, students began a week long unit led by their student teacher, Audrey Matthews. Students learned the difference between an ecofact and an artifact. Students found small items on the beach which were then baked into a cupcake. Each child was given two toothpicks in order to “excavate” their site. Students were excited as they found their ecofact.
Bering Strait Youth Leaders Training a Big Success

By Carl White
[Photos by Robin Child]

The 2016 BSSD Youth Leaders.

About 50 students from the Bering Strait School District and Nome Public Schools attended Youth Leaders Training in Unalakleet along with their sponsors and the 10 BSSD Counselors. It was a huge success! Eskimo Ninja, Nick Hanson from Unalakleet and 2011 Miss Indian World, Marjorie Tahbone from Nome, facilitated the event. They provided lots of interesting team building activities during three-day event.

Savoonga Youth Leader Vadim Yenan casts a friend’s face with plaster at the Youth Leaders conference in Unalakleet on September 17th. Students worked together to create molds of each other’s faces and later designed and painted their own masks.

The Bering Strait Youth Leaders Program is designed to provide leadership training and skills and build protective factors that reduce suicide. The program provides training and support to enhance leadership skills among youth. Youth Leaders support peers with a range of problems such as relationship difficulties, thoughts of suicide, family problems, etc. and give students the tools and confidence such as listening, problem solving and know when to refer friends to adults. It is built on the premise that students seek out their friends for support.

A student waits for their mask to set.

The students worked on three areas: School Climate, Leadership and Suicide Prevention Skills. The students reviewed results from the 2016 School Climate and Connectedness Survey for their sites. Each Youth Leader group used this data to develop a plan to take back to their community to improve school climate. Jenni Lefing from the Association of Alaska School Board facilitated this activity. Bertha Koweluk and Colleen Reynolds, from Kawerak, Inc. worked with students on enhancing their leadership skills. Nick Hanson, Lisa Ellenna and Carl White met with the students to provide information and skills to reduce suicides. BSSD Art Specialist, Robin Child led a fun team building activity where students made masks. The Youth Leaders finished their training with a big dance.

We are fortunate that we have Youth Leaders in the schools in our region. Thanks to the students and sponsors who work on monthly activities in each of the communities. Funds for this training were provided from Kawerak, Inc., Norton Sound Health Corporation-Behavioral Health, Bering Strait School District and the Department of Education and Early Development.

The Coast Guard came to visit Savoonga. They held a demonstration at the school, showing students how to use life jackets. They taught us that you can stay warm in the water for 30 minutes before hyperthermia sets in. Roger Holland, is from Anchorage and is with the Coast Guard Reserve.

Roger Holland discussing life-saving equipment.

He worked for the Coast Guard from 1990 to 1998, where he drove boats and learned the importance of saving lives. He came to Savoonga to show the kids and adults some of the life-saving equipment.
Music in Gambell

By Robin Child

Singer and Songwriter Teri Tibbett teaching a student how to create music.

Singer and songwriter Teri Tibbett is teaching music to the Gambell students for a two-week artist residency through the Artist In The Schools program. She is exploring the history of American music, beginning with Native American music through to blues, jazz, rock, and rap.

The students are learning fun songs from various cultures and playing rhythm games. Some students are even learning to play the guitar.

Teri Tibbett helping students learn how to play the guitar.

All are having lots of fun, as is evidenced by the sounds of singing, rattle shaking, and laughing throughout the school. The culminating performance was held Friday, September 23, at 2:30.

Migrant Ed Update

By Dorothy Ivanoff

The Migrant Education Program provides extra funding for the materials and programs for your child. One example of what it supports is the reading books your child receives during the summer.

Migrant Recruiters

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BSSD Migrant Records Manager

District office: Dorothy Ivanoff 624-4271

For more Information about Migrant Program go to our BSSD website at:

http://bssd.org/departments/federal_programs/migrant

You can also find our Migrant Eligibility Survey online on our BSSD website under Quick Links:

http://bssd.org/
Reach UP Launch

By Karen Beranek

REACH UP—the Raising Educational Achievement through Cultural Heritage Project—launched its Science and Culture Camp this past August in Unalakleet, Alaska. A consortium of Bering Strait School District Science Teachers, University of Alaska Fairbanks educators, and numerous scientists and Cultural Knowledge Bearers met in Unalakleet in August to further goals developed for the Raising Educational Achievement through Cultural Heritage Project (REACH UP). The Science and Culture Camp was divided between classroom lessons and field studies.

A dozen seasoned Bering Strait School District teachers geared up in rubber boots, bug spray and their fishing licenses to meet the field challenges that the Project entails. Team Salmon, guided by Audrey Mutschlecner, studied stream ecology and stream bank erosion, while Team Blueberry examined microclimate mapping, including tundra moisture and temperature readings. Both teams engineered possible structures designed to lessen their impact on permafrost, while accounting for permafrost thaw. Led Sam Norlin, Sally Keiper, Gary Cooper, and other University of Alaska Fairbanks project coordinators and scientific notables, the Science Camp participants were later joined by newly hired teachers and counselors.

The purpose of the camp is to assist classroom science teachers with providing culturally relevant STEM instruction that is effective for Alaska Native students. Through the use of resources and activities that include both western and indigenous climate knowledge, the REACH UP Project aspires to train Alaska Native youth to propose solutions to local climate changes. In addition to the three years of sustained, quality professional development for teachers, 7th through 12th grade students will investigate in depth a local issue brought about by climate change, such as coastal erosion brought about by compromised sea ice, propose solutions and present their findings to elders and the community at year end Climate Expos.

The three-year project will first examine Changing Climate: temperature changes, precipitation changes, and seasonal shifts. The second year will focus on Changing Landscapes: permafrost thaw, coastal erosion, disappearing lakes, and the shifting tree line.

The final year will analyze Changing Lifestyles: changes in infrastructure, travel and industry, and subsistence techniques and tools.

Braxton Cox, from Stebbins, commented, “I was lucky enough to attend the REACH UP camp with a local lady—Marie Otten-Pete—who works in the school. Together we learned how to incorporate culturally-relevant science activities into our classroom, shared stories from our past, and even got to pick a few berries.”

Cutler Camp 2016

By Carolyn Heflin

Bering Strait School District in partnership with Kawerak held its annual culture camp for new teachers and administrators on August 5-6, 2016.

The purpose of the culture camp is for new teachers and administrators to learn more about the students’ cultures that they are working with on a daily basis in a safe and encouraging environment. Participants were involved in fun learning activities such as a NYO game demonstration with Nick Hanson, Inupiaq dancing with Marjorie Tahbone and skin sewing with Jolene Nanouk.