

# Cultural Committee Newsletter

UAA-UAF PhD Program in Clinical-Community Psychology

February 2015

VOL. 1



## Meet the 2014—2015 Cultural Committee

*Faculty & Staff:* Ellen Lopez, Jocelyn McGee, Cathy Morgan, Inna Rivkin, & Rebecca Robinson

*Students:* Brionne Elkins, Brittany Murrell & Dhara Shah



Greetings from the Cultural Committee!  
*This newsletter is intended for students, faculty, and advisors with the intent of sharing information and creating new opportunities for community engagement.*

Our program places an emphasis on working with rural and indigenous populations. By integrating cultural experience, practice, and wisdom into our program, our aim is to prepare culturally competent scientist-practitioners, and social and policy change facilitators to serve the behavioral health needs of Alaska.

## UPCOMING EVENTS ~ SAVE THE DATE



**Who Cares: Heading Home in the Other Shoes**  
*Performed by Dr. Patricia Repar*  
Associate Professor, Departments of  
Music and Internal Medicine  
University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**Anchorage, AK**  
April 16th, 2015 (Tentative)

**Fairbanks, AK**  
TBD

Times & Locations TBD; see pg. 6 for more info. Please contact Dr. McGee for inquiries.

## Mission & Objectives

### Objectives of the Annual Cultural Experience:

- ⇒ Enhance understanding and awareness of Alaska Native cultural traditions, healing practices, and ways of life;
- ⇒ Facilitate strong relationships with cultural advisors/ Elders;
- ⇒ Increase understanding and awareness of the important role that culture plays in the human experience.

"The cultural retreat was a unique and rewarding experience. I was completely immersed in Alaska Native culture by making beaded necklaces, learning about Alaska Native dance, and listening to the amazing stories shared by our cultural advisors." - Dhara

*The mission of the Joint UAA/UAF Ph.D. in Clinical/Community Psychology Cultural Committee is to assure the integration of cultural issues throughout the UAA/UAF Joint Ph.D. Program curriculum and all doctoral program activities.*



From left to right: Dr. Jocelyn McGee, Dr. Rita Blumenstein, & Dr. Rebecca Robinson

*"[The cultural experience] varies from year to year, but includes direct exposure to Alaska Native and other cultural worldviews, values, and life experiences through contact with cultural elders and advisors. The goal of the cultural experience is to provide an opportunity to interact directly with cultures in a non-classroom setting."*

- (Student Handbook, p. 7).



Dr. Ellen Lopez & Brionne Elkins

Dr. Iva GreyWolf



## Pioneer Park: Fairbanks, AK

### Evaluation Highlights

Of those in attendance, nine students, one guest, and three faculty/staff members provided feedback on the 2014 Cultural Experience. Approximately 79% strongly agreed the experience overall was worthwhile, and 21 agreed.

#### **Cultural Advisors' Evaluation**

Advisors were overall, extremely satisfied with the 2014 cultural experience. They reported enjoying most the people, group discussions, and opportunities to listen and share. Some suggested improvements to the cultural experience pertained to continuing the event, maintaining the agenda, but allowing for more time to share in small groups. Additionally, advisors recommended discussing topics such as love, death, natural healers, and healing practices. There were also comments encouraging more interaction with the larger community.

All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they had a better understanding of Alaska Native cultures and practices which was accomplished through listening to Elders and participating in storytelling. Many of the responses spoke to feeling the Advisors were approachable, friendly, and through this experience were able to create a deep understanding and trust with Advisors.

Similar to the Advisors' feedback, students and faculty reported:

- ⇒ That small groups were an effective way to spend quality time with people;
- ⇒ An appreciation for Elders' willingness to share and participate;
- ⇒ Request to spend less time in formal settings/environments.

Requested changes for next years Cultural Experience included extending small group opportunities, unstructured time, more communal evening events (e.g., bonfire), engaging students more in sharing, emphasis on traditional crafts and healing practices, and including other cultures.



Please see the link included at the end of this newsletter, the committee is asking to hear from you regarding your opinions for the next cultural experience as we are currently planning the event.

Pioneer Park—Fairbanks, AK

*Cultural Experience Summer 2014*

GROUP PHOTO



**Back row, left to right:** Angel V., Ellen L., Max C., Chris C., Marie X., Mike W., Inna R., David W., Sam D., Jake C., Brionne W., Hugh L.

**Back middle:** Jessica P., Dhara S., Amanda Z.

**Middle:** Elizabeth F., Rita B., Iva G..

**Front:** Krissy B., Jocelyn M., Jennifer B.

# Cultural Experience 2014

## Student Snapshots

### Student Spotlight

Sharing Community Practicum Experiences  
Marie Skanis

For my community practicum I worked with the Healthy Fairbanks 2020 community health needs assessment project. Until last semester I often felt as though I hadn't met many community members who were "in the field" – no fault of the program, I had kept a narrow focus on coursework and clinical work at our internal site up until that point. For this project I was able to be part of about ten community forums with representatives from a wide variety of community organizations to ask about what the biggest health concerns are in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Additionally, in the process of adding to and modifying a report containing archival data about the health of the community, I consulted with an epidemiologist, an economist, a member of the Mental Health Trust, and several OCS employees in various cities. As it turned out, most of what all of the community members and organization representatives were talking about happened to be issues that we study in the program – substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence/sexual assault. It was invigorating to share the experience of that many people with such diverse perspectives coming together for the purpose of finding community-specific solutions to the biggest health concerns in the borough.

There's a lot that I feel very lucky to have experienced with this project: a smooth introduction into a well-defined project, agreement with my supervisor on very clear goals, working with a motivated team to accomplish an ambitious project, and being given a lot of freedom to figure out how to complete most of my tasks. One thing that I wish I would have considered earlier in the project was the possibility that team members other than my site supervisor may not be aware of what I had arranged with my supervisor. There were so few of us and they seemed like such a close-knit team that when I joined the project I took for granted that all of the team members were made aware of what I had contracted to do. It created some significant challenges down the road when I realized that did not seem to be the case. Every community project is different, but in terms of advice that's what I wish my past self had known and something I'll definitely have on my radar more in the future.



Jessica Petalio



Krissy Bodnar



Jake Chapman



Dhara Shah



Hugh Leonard

## Faculty Spotlight

### *Giving Psychology Away*

*E.J. David, PhD*

As many of the students in our program know, I strongly believe that community psychology is best described through its five guiding principles (Rudkin, 2003): (1) we pay attention to contextual and environmental factors, not just individual-level factors; (2) we appreciate diversity; (3) we acknowledge that values influence all aspects of our work; (4) we embrace and look to make social change, not just individual-level changes; and (5) we have a strengths-based perspective, not just focusing on deficits or pathology. These five principles should guide community psychology work and the work of those who would like to consider themselves as “community psychologists.”

As my own understanding of community psychology evolved over the past 10 years, as I delved deeper into the works of the many pioneers and great thinkers and the movers and shakers in the field (e.g., Caplan & Nelson, 1973; Maton, 2000; Rappaport, 2005; Sarason, 1981), I slowly began to think that perhaps we need to add another principle that should guide our work: *we should also “give psychology away.”*

There are many ways in which we can “give psychology away,” and to provide a detailed and comprehensive discussion of them is beyond the scope of this column (a journal article about this topic would be awesome!). So instead, I will just briefly describe a few relatively simple ways in which we can “give psychology away.”



**E. J. David, PhD**

**“So the point is this: let’s not just talk to each other anymore, let’s actually talk to the people who we are supposed to be serving.”**

### **Upcoming Event**

**Who Cares:**

**Heading Home in the Other Shoes**  
*(Continued from Front)*

The performance features live and recorded music, short films, and narrative, followed by audience discussion. The performance is designed to engage health and mental health care professionals, artists, and community members in reflection and discussion about the role of culture and community in health and healing and stems from international interdisciplinary collaborative advocacy and research.

*Performed by Patricia Repar  
Facilitated by Dr. Jocelyn McGee  
Assistant Professor of Psychology  
University of Alaska Anchorage*

In general, we can give psychology away by *going beyond the conventional walls of academia*. Instead of publishing our works only in peer-reviewed journals, books, book chapters, and technical reports, we should also publish our work in newspapers, community newsletters, websites, and other easily accessible forms. For those of us who do work with marginalized groups, such communities often have newsletters, websites, or other media that are popularly consulted or read by their members. Of course, the language we use and the manner in which we write these “other types” of publications need to be adjusted so that it is appropriate for a general audience. This way, we actually make an impact and contribution to the people that we are supposed to be serving in the first place. We need to remember that very few people are privileged enough to have access to journal articles and academic books, or even attend college, so we need to think of creative ways for us to share what we know, what we have, and what we can give to people who probably need them the most.

The same idea should apply to the presentations that we do; instead of just presenting in professional conferences, classrooms, and lecture halls, we should also seek out presentations to community organizations in their venues in their turf so that we can share our work with the people who might find them useful. Again, we need to remember that very few people are privileged enough to attend professional conferences; the majority of people who our work is about and supposed to be for do not go to conferences or read journal articles.

So the point is this: let’s not just talk to each other anymore, let’s actually talk to the people who we are supposed to be serving. And perhaps most importantly, let’s not just listen to each other; let’s listen to the communities that

we are working with.

I have a suggestion for all of us – students and faculty. Let’s have four separate sections in our CVs: (1) peer-reviewed publications – these are our typical publications such as journal articles, book chapters, books, and the like; (2) professional/scientific/academic presentations – these are our typical presentations in conferences, invited lectures, and other similar talks; (3) community publications – these can be newspaper op-eds, press releases community newspapers or newsletters that summarize your research, website blogs or columns, and other similar attempts to share your work to the general community in written form; and (4) community presentations – these can be presentations, workshops, or other similar activities that attempt to share our work with community organizations and community members.

Then, let’s look at how much we have for all four sections. This should give us a pretty good idea of how balanced or imbalanced we have been in terms of who we “give” or “share” our work with. For many of us, it is likely that our CVs will show an imbalance that suggests that we are not going beyond the conventional walls of academia as much as we stay within it. Perhaps this realization will create a need and a drive – a motivation – to restore some balance. Some of us might say things like: “well, we don’t get rewarded as much for non-academic work” or “academic systems and institutions are not set-up so that community work is encouraged and rewarded” or “but we are not trained to write about and present our work in any other way beyond the academic way” or something similar. I agree, we do need some systemic changes in academia. But I will save that for a later column.

**“...it is likely that our CV’s will show an imbalance that suggests that we are not going beyond the conventional walls of academia...”**

# Cultural Advisor Council Mentors



The following is a list of cultural advisors and mentors of our program who provided their expertise and guidance at our last cultural retreat and their professional and personal interests or expertise.

## Max Chickalusion

Alaska Native values and ways of life (including hunting and fishing practices)  
Athabaskan, grew up in Tyonek, currently lives in Anchorage

## Paula Ayunerak

Health aide for 27 years, and as a supervisor/instructor for 17 years; writes column about health issues in regional newspaper, The Delta Discovery  
Yup'ik, grew up near Scammon Bay, currently lives in Alakanuk

## Sam Demientiff

Retired from the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Has held highest positions on several Native associations; importance of mind, body, spiritual, and land connection  
Athabaskan, grew up in Holy Cross and Fairbanks, currently lives in Fairbanks

## Elizabeth Fleagle

How we live, how we lived, subsistence  
Inupiaq, grew up in Alatna River, currently lives in Fairbanks

## Iva GreyWolf, PhD

Co-occurring disorders & complex trauma  
Anishinabe/Assiniboine, grew up in communities in Northeast Montana, currently lives in Sitka

## Rita Blumenstein

Medicinal plants; energy-based healing; traditional healing; culturally-based counseling. Alaska's first certified Tribal Doctor  
Yupik, Athabaskan, Aleut, Russian, grew up in Tununak, Southwest Alaska, currently lives in Anchorage



From left to right, top row: Rita Blumenstein, and Iva GreyWolf;  
bottom row: Sam Demientiff, Elizabeth Fleagle, and Max Chickalusion

## Cultural Advisor Council Mission

The mission of the Cultural Advisor Council is to assure the integration of cultural issues throughout the UAA/UAF Joint Ph.D. Program curriculum and all doctoral program activities. Our cultural advisors provide consulting to faculty and students, and serve many functions including, but not limited to the following:



- ⇒ Co-facilitating the annual Cultural Experience
- ⇒ Serving as cultural ambassadors to provide cultural knowledge for students and faculty
- ⇒ Serving as cultural members of dissertation committees
- ⇒ Collaborating with students and faculty to provide cultural support
- ⇒ Serving as guest speakers in classes and other events

## Please Help Us Plan The Next Retreat

### A Survey

We'd like to hear from you! Please take a few minutes to complete an anonymous survey:

[http://uaa.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_1WYjgZJ6hlePoRD](http://uaa.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1WYjgZJ6hlePoRD)

# Cultural Experience

“Culture is in the way I move my hands when I talk and the way you inflect that word as you speak. It is your catchphrase, your expression, your connection. It is storied tradition, meanings and lessons. Culture diversifies, unifies, and inspires me to lean in and listen closely.” - Krissy

**Save The Date**

**August 19th -**

**August 21st**

# 2015