



Sealaska Heritage Institute

Integrating Native Arts, Culture, Language, and History into Schools

Sealaska Heritage Institute's (SHI) mission is to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures with goals of promoting cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding.

Our Clan Leaders and Elders realized that our children were learning in new ways and not in the ways of our ancestors. We no longer lived in clan houses; we no longer learned our history and traditions around the clan house fire; and we no longer accompanied our aunts and uncles in their daily activities to learn the ways of our ancestors. In the 1980 Elders' Conference, an overriding message from these leaders was that we must adapt to the new ways, but yet integrate our culture into the new institutions if our ancient culture was to survive. In response to the Elders' directive, Sealaska created the Sealaska Heritage organization "to initiate, support, and promote the maintenance of Native cultural values."

The Southeast Alaska Native core cultural values, including Haa Latseení: Strength of Body, Mind, and Spirit and Haa Shuká: Uniting Past, Present, and Future Generations, calls for the integration of Native arts, culture, language, and history into schools.

In accordance with the Elders' directive and in adherence to our core cultural values, SHI's policy calls for the integration of Native arts, culture, language, and history into schools. Studies and evaluations have shown that the integration of Native culture into schools serves to promote academic achievement and school retention of Native students, contributes to the survival of Native cultures, and enhances cross-cultural understanding.

SHI will encourage schools to adopt policies and to provide financial support that support the integration of Native arts, culture, language and history into schools.

SHI will further seek to ensure that the instruction of Native culture and its supporting educational materials will be offered and developed in a manner

that respects traditional culture and practices and acknowledges clan ownership of crests, names, songs, and other cultural and intellectual property.

SHI will encourage Native students to become teachers and will continue to support teacher training programs to increase the number of Native teachers in all schools.

With a dearth of Native teachers in schools, SHI has developed and implemented cultural orientation programs and workshops and lectures to support non-Native teachers to learn about Native arts, culture, language, and history. SHI has also welcomed the participation of these teachers into many of its ongoing educational and cultural programs.

In compliance with the directives of the forty respected Elders, who met at the 1980 conference, to ensure the survival of Southeast Alaska Native cultures, SHI's Board of Trustees and its Council of Traditional Scholars support the integration of Native arts, culture, language, and history into schools and the instruction by both Native and non-Native teachers and furthermore express their appreciation to these dedicated teachers for their efforts.

Rosita Kaaháni Worl, Ph.D.,
President, Sealaska Heritage Institute
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