

Ways to True Community Collaboration

By Sonya Selanoff and Holly Cusack-McVeigh



IUPUI students and village youth paint fence posts for the community cemetery.



Teaching the next generation.



Students learn from Assistant Curator for Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian Eleanor Hadden at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.



Helping to organize the library at the community youth center in Nanwalek.

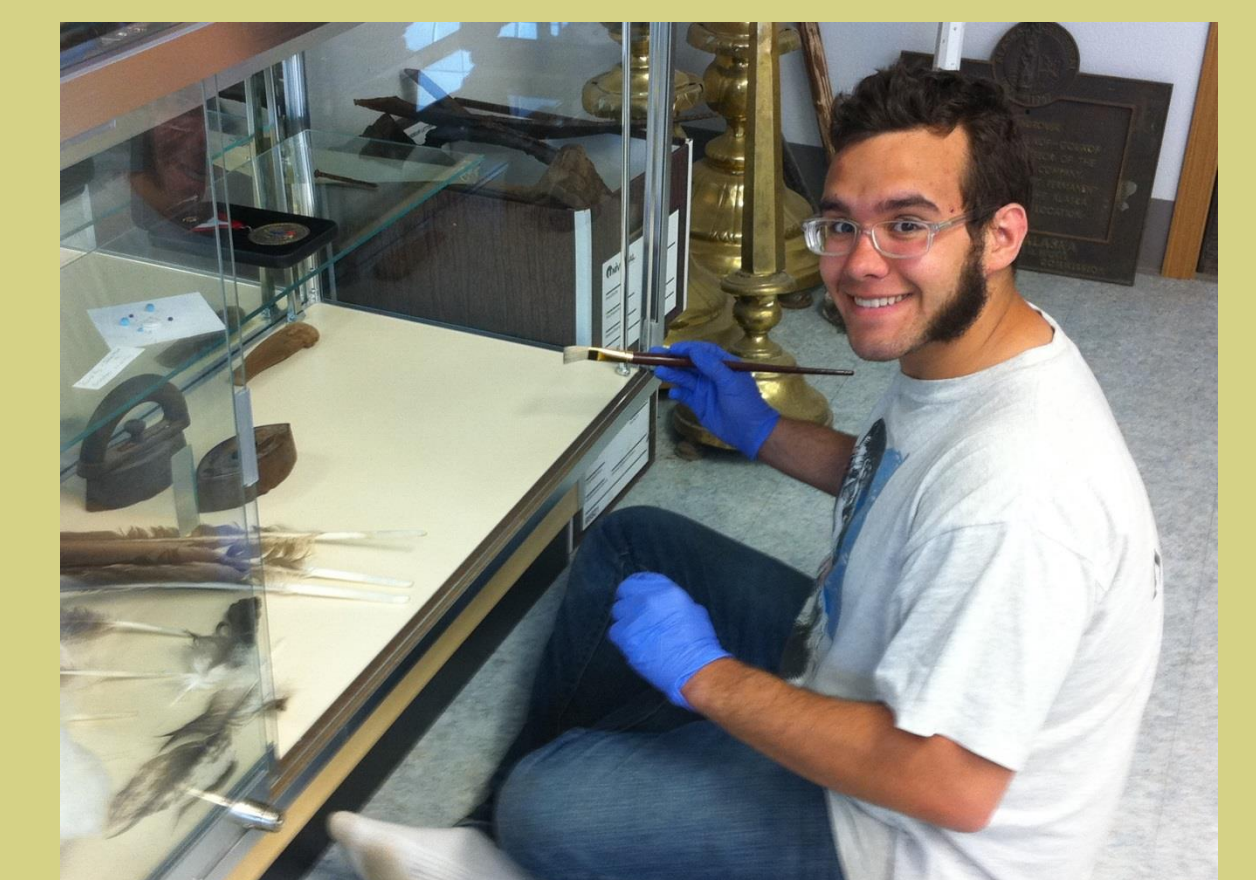
“We've learned to avoid the ‘top down’ approach to doing community work.”

An excerpt from student field notes, June 15, 2013
Anthropology Undergraduate Student

In the summer of 2013, students from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) traveled some 4,000 miles to the Sugpiaq Alutiiq Village of Nanwalek, Alaska, to participate in a community-based tribal museum project. Working alongside community members and youth, students gained a deeper understanding of culture and had the opportunity to apply their museum skills. More importantly, they learned the importance of reciprocity and the value of listening.

“This was truly a unique project in many ways, but most importantly because Nanwalek was given the opportunity to drive (guide) the project to reflect our community.”

Sonya Selanoff, Nanwalek Community Member and Project Co-Coordinator



“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.”

Museum Studies Graduate Student



Native Village of Nanwalek

