



Wise Words of the Yup'ik People: We Talk to You because We Love You

Ann Fienup-Riordan

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The Yup'ik people of southwestern Alaska were some of the last Arctic peoples to come into contact with non-Natives, and as a result, Yup'ik language and many traditions remain vital into the twenty-first century. *Wise Words of the Yup'ik People* documents their *qanruyutet* (adages, words of wisdom, and oral instructions) regarding the proper living of life. Throughout history, these distinctive wise words have guided the relations between men and women, parents and children, siblings and cousins, fellow villagers, visitors, strangers, and even with non-Natives. Yup'ik elders have chosen to share these wise words during Calista Elders Council gatherings and conventions since 1998 for instrumental reasons—because of their continued relevance and power to change lives.

The Calista Elders Council, which represents some thirteen hundred Yup'ik elders, recently spearheaded efforts at cultural revitalization through gatherings with younger community members. In describing the content of traditional instruction as well as its central motivation—“We talk to you because we love you”—elders not only educate Yup'ik young people but also open a window into their view of the world for all of us.

Wise Words of the Yup'ik People will serve as a valuable resource for the Yup'ik people and those who wish to learn more about their lives and values.

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