

GROWING OUR OWN: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH, SCHOLARS, AND EDUCATION
*Proceedings from the Alaska Native Studies Conference (2015)***Readings with Richard, a poem**

For Richard Dauenhauer

Ishmael Khaagwáask' Hope¹¹Independent scholar, poet, and storyteller, Juneau, AK

We had our little Tang Dynasty
poets circle, scribbling their notes
to friends. Local, place-based,
each word quieted with the rain
that ran down our roofs.

We had our small clan house,
the old-timers telling stories
that call in the ancestral breath
that lined the ocean before
Raven was born. *How do you choose
which stories to tell?* you once asked
Bob Zuboff. He responded with a story,
and after a sandwich he was done.
The man got so close to the bear
that he married her, and we all
knew it wouldn't last, but we listened
to the end. We never got our answer,
just a story that still runs through
our minds.

We had our own
Elizabethan theater. Our dreams
could be told in the public square.
They belonged there, in some form,
especially the dreams
of the old masters. The bear shits
in the woods. Fog steams
through the cracks of the dock.
Television plays in the background
of Willie's telling of Khaaxh'achgóok.

I always paid attention to my dad,
sipping his stoli, talking with you

and others about the next clan
conference. How many memorials,
conferences, classes, plays, barbecues,
and readings have you been to?
You trust us to keep it up, but I was there.
It's going to be hard to remake the world
you and Nora brought to us. The Raven
lifts up the ocean like a little blanket.
We dipped our toes in, picked up an urchin
or a dolly, kneeled in the sand,
but did how closely did we look?

*We should appreciate good people
when they walk among us, my dad would say.*
Worn out, reading your *Selected Poems*,
I huddle around the fire in poetry's
comfort, and try to recall everything
that you and Nora wanted us to know.