

RESILIENT SPIRITS

By
Charlene Renee Apok

RECOMMENDED:




Jenny Bell Jones, M.A.

Courtney Carothers

Dr. Courtney Carothers



Judith Ramos, M.A.



Cathy Brooks, M.S

Co-Chair

Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development



Dr. Jennifer L. L. Carroll

Co-Chair

Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development

4/13/2016

Date

RESILIENT SPIRITS

A

PROJECT

Presented to the Faculty

of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Charlene Renee Apok, B.A, A.A

May 2016

Abstract

The following is a report of a project, “Resilient Spirits”, which took place in Nome, Alaska. This project aimed to highlight stories of healing through survivorship. This work focuses on the assets within Alaska Native culture, community, and people. Development of strategies to address violence need to include healing. The project selected a mixed methodology of talking circles and photovoice to highlight the themes of healing, strength, and resilience. These methods served to engage participants in a culturally appropriate manner, in a safe space, and could be utilized at their comfort level.

The first phase of the project was the introductory talking circle. It was used to discuss the themes and set up the photo activity. The second phase, photovoice, was chosen as a project activity to assist in sharing stories. Participants used digital cameras in their everyday lives to represent what healing and strength looked like from their perspective. The final third phase was another talking circle. It was a time to reflect on the first talking circle and the process of photovoice.

From the unique combination of talking circles and photovoice, stories emerged on healing where there is often silence. Photographs provided a rich illustration of a sense of holistic healing and strength. Knowledge on healing and strength can be found within our Alaska Native communities. Healing is a renewable resource and experienced inter-generationally.

Keywords: healing, strength, talking circles, photovoice



Resilient Spirits

NOME, ALASKA

Charlene Apok | University of Alaska Fairbanks | March 1, 2016

Quyanaqpak

There are many to acknowledge. I raise my hands to all who have given me support and encouragement as I travelled this path.

As a project report, I would like to acknowledge the individuals who participated. First, the individual from Bering Sea Women's Group who enthusiastically promoted the project, we could not have had this without you. Second, the Elder participant who brought immense guidance, wisdom, and courage. And of course the participants – for sharing your strength, your stories, your vision and friendship. This special circle of women will stay in my heart always.

I would like to thank my family who tirelessly cheer me on. They have given me unconditional love and grounding.

My immediate family has day in and day out worked through the academic demands. Thank you SB for the sacrifice. To my igitiiŋ, my dear son, my motivation and inspiration.

I want to acknowledge my indigenous scholar mentors who provide guidance by asking me the right questions. Further, I thank my committee at the University of Alaska Fairbanks for supporting this work.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the financial support of The CIRI Foundation and Bering Straits Foundation.

Table of Contents

Signature page.....	i
Title page.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Cover page.....	iv
Quyanaqpak.....	v
Kifuvaatka <i>my ancestors</i>	1
Dedication poem.....	2
Iglauyaaq <i>path or route</i> (Project introduction/prologue).....	3
Naalaktuag <i>to listen to her/him/it</i> (Talking Circles).....	8
Ilisaurrun <i>illustration, example, lesson, parable</i> (Photovoice).....	10
Tuvraaksrat <i>guidelines, plan of action</i> (Methods).....	11
Uqaqta <i>let's talk</i> (First talking circle).....	15
Qiñigaaq <i>picture, photograph, painting</i> (Photovoice activity).....	22
Iluaqsi <i>to become well, to heal her/him/it</i> (Second talking circle).....	59
Tuvraq <i>to follow, track her/him/it; to imitate, portray, copy, her/him/it= e.g. a sewing pattern, instructions to build something</i>	63
Piyuminaqtuᅇa <i>I have hope, I am hopeful</i>	67
References.....	70
Appendix A.....	72
Appendix B.....	78
Appendix C.....	79

Uvaŋa atiga Charlene Apok. Iñupiaqsisiga Aqpik.

My name is Charlene Apok. My Iñupiaq name is Aqpik, salmonberry.

Aanagalu Lorraine Hammond-lu, Agnes Amarok-lu. Aakaga Sandra 'Baby Lu' Apok.

My grandmothers are Lorraine Hammond and Agnes Amarok. My mother is Sandra 'Baby Lu'

Apok.

Kifuvaatka my ancestors

I introduce who I am to those around me by sharing my relations and where we are from. The importance of relationships is honored when we situate ourselves to our ancestors, our relatives. As Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) explains, "...relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality" (p.7). In the context of a community project, sharing who I am is essential in building connection. It allows community members to know who I am, what people and place I come from.

Knowing relations is beneficial both as a learner and sharer of knowledge. As a learner, I am taught with guidance through certain sets of relationships. As I share knowledge, I am responsible for sharing how I arrived at this information. Indigenous peoples recognize that our identity shapes the way we receive and process knowledge. It is a responsibility to be transparent in the learning process, and that begins with my relatives and place. Likewise, the origin of this project is rooted in honoring the women who have come before me and this honoring continues to shape much of this work.

Dedication poem.

she ran far

quite far

her body knew

what her body knew

what this body knows

try not to remember, run

not remembering it all

t r y i n g t o e s c a p e

in this brown skin

this body knows

her name now passed

i h o p e

her body will know but not remember

run no more

re.memory

that strength will heal

now, now forget me not

capok.2013

Iglauyaaq path or route (Project introduction/prologue)

As an Iñupiaq woman who was raised in Anchorage, Alaska, I grew up continually longing to know more about my history and identity. I recognize that my background has given me certain experiences that have brought me to where I am today. I arrived at the topic of healing through continual self-reflection and consideration of the experiences of women in my family. I struggled to find hope in the realities of violence against women. I strongly felt the need to address this in my Alaska Native community. My efforts to serve my community while learning more about my cultural background were mobilized as I continued my education. This was my route to developing the Resilient Spirits project.

In 2013 I was fortunate to have indigenous mentors while attending the University of Washington. While choosing an area of study, they really encouraged me to work with things I am passionate about. This advice changed everything for me. From there, I learned to utilize western education to serve my efforts in my community and cultural work. I finished my B.A. with a thesis titled *Storytelling is Healing* (Apok, C. 2013). This project allowed me to explore prevention and response to domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) through traditional healing methods, mainly the practice of storytelling. Supported through a pilot study grant from the department of American Ethnic Studies, my study was interdisciplinary and the project was well-received. I gained familiarity with statistics and data on Native women surviving violence, as well as policy and legislation. My personal observations and experiences became contextualized in a larger setting of the issue of violence against women. This coupling of personal and educational learning has been very meaningful. Most importantly, I began to imagine solutions and responses. I've shared this process because it gave me foundational

concepts in using cultural values and ways of knowing in research to serve my community. This project launched my continued work in promoting indigenous healing, health, and wellness.

The other part of the pathway that has led to the Resilient Spirits project has been my personal healing journey. Oftentimes this aspect is not shared in academic settings. However, going back to relations and their importance, there is an aspect of reciprocity in maintaining and creating them. The project themes of healing, strength and resiliency can be sensitive to talk about. In my relationship to community, I cannot ask them to share without doing so myself. Again, reporting this project is not complete if I only re-present what others have shared. I must share my own experience because it has shaped the project, as well as it being part of the process in working with community.

In the fall of 2014 I went home. I went to the village my mother grew up in, Golovin, Alaska and the larger town where I have many relatives, Nome, Alaska. I hadn't been there since I was quite small. The trip truly brought a lot of healing. I was unprepared for all the emotion. At that time, I happened to be in a Community Healing and Wellness class and used the final paper as a space to reflect. An excerpt (Apok, 2014) from this writing presents one stage of grief,

I lost my little self in a delayed shattered world. I began to grieve as my siblings had been for years, but mine came all at once. From the confusion and pain I created anger and resentment. I was mean. I was unforgiving. I refused help. This went on and on, until May 20th 2003. My grandma called and told me that my mom had passed. Some say the hanging was suicide, some of us believe it was murder. The cycle of violence came through till the end for my beautiful mother. I never had more regret and remorse than

when I realized I had lost my time to forgive and get to know my mom. I was 18 and had been selfish, thinking only of my pain, never thinking of her (p.7).

I carried a lot of trauma and grief even as a child. The mounting pain peaked when I lost my mother. I entered adulthood very shaken and broken. I specifically share this loss because it became a poignant place of healing in my life. I learned a tough life-lesson on forgiveness and love, the hardest way possible. I see it now as an eternal gift from my mother. She taught me a big part of the healing process, forgiveness. Forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of self. Her passing left a legacy I'm determined to live.

On this fall 2014 trip I visited her homeland, her place of resting. It brought an immense sense of peace. Shortly afterward she visited me in a dream. She sat shoulder to shoulder with me and we made a heart shape from stones. We filled the heart with pinecones. I told my sister about this to which she simply observed, "You visited her so she visited you." It is not a coincidence that my reunion with family, reconnection to place; land and waters, created a part of my healing journey. My physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual beings were ready to let go, ready to receive good things.

Again, it is not common to share something like this in academia. However, it is part of the process of how I arrived at this project. It is also the foundational values I built into the project design. Talking circles and storytelling encompass these values: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (Archibald, 2008). It has been of the utmost importance to prioritize indigenous values in the research work that I do. Using theory is helpful in naming and presenting frameworks and for developing methods and strategies as well. Part of the degree program requirements in conducting this project was to write a methodology

paper. This paper presents three frameworks of study that have shaped understanding the context of DVSA among Alaska Native women. Details on the following sections are written in the methods paper (See Appendix A):

- 1) **Kisitchisit** *numerals; numbers* (Data)
- 2) **Ilagiigñiq** *relationship* (Gender lens)
- 3) **Pilluk** *to survive danger, to escape death, to survive illness* (Historical trauma & Intergenerational historical trauma frameworks).

The three frameworks are utilized with an indigenous perspective. The first framework analyzes available data on the intersection of American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) women experiencing disproportionate rates of violence. It notes political misses in protecting AIAN women. It questions the effectiveness of producing more quantitative data to address this issue that tribal communities are attempting to address.

The second framework positions DVSA as gender based violence, recognizing that unequal constructs associated with gender are inserted within power dynamics. This framework helps make apparent that binary constructs of gender are problematic in that they do not mirror reality; that in fact, there are many fluid gender identities. Especially important to AIAN people, whose indigenous societies once had in place balanced gender relations that were egalitarian. The shifts from balanced gender relations to western binary constructs of gender have negatively impacted previously harmonious relations.

Third, the framework of historical trauma (HT) and intergenerational historical trauma (IHT) situate unresolved grief and trauma carried by generations of AIAN people. The larger

context of HT and IHT destigmatize contemporary challenges among AIAN people by recognizing the impacts of cultural loss and identity. These three frameworks have been integrated to assess the issue of DVSA from an indigenous perspective. It is important to note the unique combination of frameworks used because they inform a purposeful strategy in creating this project.

What does it look like to practice an indigenous method? In this capacity of the project, an example would be participating to the same extent which you are asking of others. It means sharing as I did above, not only in person, but in writing. This included practicing respect and reciprocity through storytelling. Decolonizing the methods of research are just as important in writing as they are in practice; so this report includes my sharing as it did in person. I have attached indigenous ways of knowing to doing. They are not separate. Therefore, I wouldn't exclude this part of the practice in the report, just because it isn't customary in western academia. Practices of decolonizing methodologies have been hard fought for by indigenous scholars and have greatly influenced this project (Smith 1999, Kovach 2009, Wilson 2008).

It was the combination of life story as shared above, with continued education that formed the themes of this project. My own continued healing journey has not been separate from the formal educational aspects. Both learnings have contributed to creating this project. The values and experiences listed above developed into the use of two methods for the project: talking circles and photovoice. The following sections will describe the two practices and how they fit into the themes of this project.

Naalaktuaq to listen to her/him/it (Talking Circles)

Talking circles are a valuable way to share knowledge and build consensus. Circles represent balance and continuity. When people sit in a circle, each person holds an equal part. The characteristics of the Talking Circle appealed to me very much. The relationship of indigenous communities and research has been bumpy. Often, research is very extractive and does not give back to the people who give information. Research has long been done ‘on’ indigenous peoples, communities, and cultures, and not so much ‘with’ or even less so ‘by’. Despite recent review and ethical guidelines being in place, there is still room to create better partnerships. It was important that this project was collaborative and gave back. I didn’t want to select a project that told people what to do; I wanted it to be shaped by people who wanted to engage on the topic of healing. It was hard to propose a project in the academic setting while still maintaining that it be community driven. I also wanted to avoid ‘talking at’ people through power points or presentations. Most of all, I wanted a project *for* my community, *for* the people. Whereas the process ‘how’ was given priority over producing a ‘what’. Reflecting on the value of storytelling led to the idea of talking circles.

The format of talking circles fit well into the considerations above. Talking circles have been successfully used in Alaska tribal health (Morgan & Freeman 2009). Talking circles that include Elder involvement, equal participant engagement, and active listening create a safe space for sharing.

Direction from Elders is an essential part of talking circles; they provide spiritual guidance and wisdom. As community leaders, the presence of high esteem for them prevents conflict. Although talking circles practice equal participation, the circle can be open, closed and moderated by an Elder. Often, the opening sets the tone for everyone who participates. A circle

led by an Elder might entail starting with a prayer, song, or guiding words. They might have an object of significance that is held by the person sharing. When one is done sharing, they pass the object on. Since circles are used for healing, resolving conflict, or gaining consensus, proper closure is needed. The Elder may initiate another round of speaking/listening if needed; they can summarize what is being said and make connections. They can close the circle as they find appropriate, similar to how they started.

The characteristic of a circle is that all equally participate. Everyone can share to their comfort level. When someone is sharing, she is the only one who speaks. Speakers are not interrupted. When individuals share, it is the responsibility of everyone else to listen. Each person waits her turn to share. Though called a talking circle, there is much more listening going on. For this project, a talking circle ensured that I, as the researcher, participated as much as I was asking participants to participate. This means I would share my own story in relation to the themes discussed. Reciprocity in this context is giving and sharing our stories. Showing respect through listening provides a safe space for the stories to be shared. Each person knows they can share and be heard.

Talking circles are a culturally appropriate way of engaging with indigenous peoples. They allow participants to share at their comfort level, on their terms. This aspect was much more compatible with this project's themes than methods like surveys, interviews with prodding questions, or focus groups where sharing stories might be led or influenced by others. The use of talking circles also helps alleviate the researcher-participant dynamics. The atmosphere of active listening invites a safe space for sharing. Respect and reciprocity of sharing and receiving stories is done with guidance from an Elder. The themes discussed in the talking circle direct the photovoice activity. The following will describe the photovoice method.

Ilisaurrun illustration, example, lesson, parable (Photovoice)

Photovoice is an activity where people use photography based on chosen themes in order to help tell their story. This method has been utilized among marginalized groups to help represent their experiences. The non-profit website, photovoice.org, lists their vision and mission:

Photovoice's vision is for a world in which no one is denied the opportunity to speak out and be heard. Photovoice's mission is to build skills within disadvantaged and marginalized communities. To achieve this, we utilize innovative participatory photography and digital storytelling methods. These skills enable individuals to represent themselves and create tools for advocacy and communication. Through this, and through developing partnerships, we deliver positive social change (Retrieved from <https://photovoice.org/vision-and-mission/>).

In the developing stages of the project, a mentor suggested I look into this method. It is known to be an empowering process for those who participate. This method was appealing because the activity seemed meaningful to those who took part. For DVSA survivors, enabling participants to give a visual aspect to their story was unique, as these incidents remain very hidden. Most of all, photovoice was appealing because it's a flexible medium in which participants can engage at their own comfort level.

Projects from the photovoice website range greatly. Examples include: *MAMPU-Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction* – a project looking at migrant work, *And We Shall Find Tales in the Shadows* – a Syrian refugee focus, and *Voice of Freedom* – work with women from Sudan and Sinai who have escaped trafficking. A project in London, *Change the*

Picture (Coetzee, Dabrowska, Hockton, & Fairey, 2008) worked with vulnerable women (homeless and/or sex workers) from a women's center. The project consisted of the photo activity and workshops to create postcards to bring awareness to the issue.

I was also able to find some relevant academic research projects that used the photovoice method. A health and behavior approach (Wang & Burris, 1997) used photovoice in a community to create a participatory needs assessment. Specific work addressing intimate partner violence and sexual health was done with Latina immigrants in the U.S southwest (Moya, Chávez-Baray, & Martinez, 2014). Regionally specific, a photovoice project with Nunavut Inuit in the circumpolar north was done to assess food security (Lardeau, Healey, & Ford, 2011). Gathering photovoice aspects from health, gender-based violence, and location in the arctic, all within academic research were pieced together for this project. Selection of this method paired with talking circles provided a means to approach the topics of healing, strength and resiliency in a sensitive, meaningful manner. Once the mixed methods were selected, they were taken to the community for feedback. Endorsement from multiple levels in the community, including that of Bering Sea Women's Group (BSWG) were promising. The next section presents project goals and the mixed method design.

Tuvraaksrat guidelines, plan of action (Methods)

The goal of this project is to highlight stories of healing, strength and resiliency through survivorship of domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA). The project hopes to learn prevention and response to violence by focusing on these topics. Often, incidences of violence are only seen as the extent of the damage. Data and statistics are used to represent the extent of the problem. Mainstream media emphasizes the horrific events, often leaving out whether or not

victims were able to access justice. This leaves a sense of hopelessness. Problem-centered analysis does not arrive at creating solutions. Our Alaska Native communities have faced much adversity resulting from colonization and accompanying symptoms of historical trauma. There are many survivors of violence and trauma. Despite the challenges faced, we have healthy individuals, families and communities. This means that within our communities we have people who are knowledgeable about healing, have a lot of strength, and are very resilient. By shifting our attention to healing, strength and resiliency, we can create strategies based on the assets within our communities to prevent and respond to violence.

Kiñami *who then? which person, I wonder* (Participants)

Prior to my arrival in the community of Nome, women and men were invited to participate in this project through circulation of fliers (See Appendix B) in the local community of Nome. These were posted through collaboration with the Bering Sea Women's Group. Members of this organization personally extended invitations to women who they thought may be interested. A local radio announcement was also made. A Facebook notification was shared (See Appendix C). Finally, per the practice of talking circles, a respected Elder from the area was invited to help lead the talking circles.

The talking circle participants included five women. One was the Elder, three were estimated to be in their 40s and 50s. As the youngest participant, I was in my early 30s. All participants were Alaskan Native- Iñupiaq, Yu'pik or Siberian Yu'pik. These demographics were not officially recorded but are observations.

Naug *where* (Project Location)

This project took place in Nome, Alaska which is in the Bering Straits region, on the southern part of the Seward Peninsula. Though not urban, Nome is considered a hub with a population of 3797. Nearly half of the population identifies as American Indian/Alaska Native only (City-data, 2013). It was recognized that surrounding rural communities in Alaska do not often have the same opportunities to participate and be represented in such projects. For example, the two smaller communities I visited during the formative years of the project, Golovin and White Mountain, have populations of around 200. My collaboration with Bering Sea Women's group, a service that is often accessed by members in the surrounding villages in the Bering Straits Region, helped me to be inclusive of women also in outlying villages. Additionally, the time frame which the project took place was chosen by the non-profit. Dates were selected for a time where many nearby village residents come to visit Nome. This timing helped maximize the available population who could be invited to attend.

Savlagun *tool* (Equipment, Materials)

Materials used included a password-protected laptop with a backup hard drive. Documents such as consent forms and project summaries were kept on this laptop. This laptop was used for field notes, keeping project documents, and uploading of photographs. Documents and files for the project were password encrypted.

A total of ten digital cameras with memory cards were brought to the community for participant use. There was no monetary compensation for participants. Instead, appreciation for participation was entry for a gift basket raffle. Three gift baskets were created. The project also

brought honorarium blankets for the lead collaborator from Bering Sea Women's Group and of course, for the Elder. Other materials included light refreshments for both talking circles.

The project themes of healing, strength and resiliency were explored through three stages. The first talking circle was a gathering to get to know one another, introduce the project, and discuss the themes through sharing stories. This process remained flexible to accommodate participants' discussions, inviting other themes they wanted to highlight. This talking circle was used to provide information but also to solicit feedback to better shape the project for the participants involved. At the end of this talking circle, participants who desired to take part were directed in the photovoice activity using agreed upon topics. The talking circle participants decided to keep the themes of healing, strength and resiliency.

The second phase of the project design was the photo activity. Participants were provided digital cameras to take pictures in their everyday lives that represented healing, strength and resiliency. Prompt questions used included: *What does healing look like to me? And where do I find strength?* Participants received instruction on how to use the cameras and were given contact information for questions. They had a rough timeline of five days to reflect and take photos.

The third phase of the project was to have another talking circle to talk about the process of partaking in the photovoice activity. Participant photographs were collected and organized before meeting for the second talking circle. The second talking circle took place one week after the first. This talking circle purpose was to share the experience of taking photos based on the themes and to provide feedback.

A future fourth phase was offered to participants as a way to extend the photovoice project. For example, participants were given suggestions, such as a photo exhibit and showing for close friends and family, a public sharing of the photo gallery, or a permanent exhibit made for the local women's shelter. Photovoice method sometimes produces a medium for wider sharing to raise awareness. However, this activity was completely up to the participants. This potential fourth phase was mentioned at the first talking circle as something to consider. At the second talking circle, the option was explored again and offered. This fourth phase was not mandatory to consider the project complete. Instead, it was offered as another tool that the participants could choose to utilize at their comfort level of sharing their story.

Now that the goals and project design have been outlined, I will describe the fulfillment of each stage.

Uqaqta *let's talk* (First talking circle)

I began my first semester of the M.A program in the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development in the spring of 2014. I made two trips between Nome, Golovin, and White Mountain in the fall of 2014 and 2015 prior to the actual project dates in 2016. These trips were made to introduce the project prospectus to the communities and organizations such as the Bering Sea Women's Group. I was able to network and continually gain feedback on the project idea. Once the project was granted IRB approval through the University of Alaska Fairbanks, dates were selected with preference from the Bering Sea Women's Group.

The first talking circle was held March 14, 2016. A room was reserved at the UAF Northwest Campus in Nome. Coffee, water and light refreshments were provided. The importance of providing food should not be overlooked. Nourishing people who come together is

an essential part of the process. A total of five of us participated in the talking circle. It is said seven is an ideal number, but five and nine work equally well. Too few or too many can disrupt the process. Our small group of five worked out nicely.

Natural conversation reinforced the importance of relations, as we exchanged who were our relatives and where we were from. As expected, participants' place of descent varied, from Nome, Golovin, White Mountain, Little Diomed, and Savoonga. We were fortunate to have a local respected Elder guide us. The themes came up in discussion without effort. An ivory billiken (good luck charm) was passed around in clockwise direction for taking turns for speaking. I was granted first turn in sharing story. This was preferable, given my 'outsider' position. My sharing would set precedence for the others sharing. Although each could share at their own comfort level, I knew my own transparency would go a long way; it would be beneficial not only for me but also for the group.

I shared my experiences of abuse and trauma, from childhood into adulthood. I reflected on my continuous pathway to healing, including ways I found strength. Everyone listened respectfully and without interruption. Each person shared their story of survivorship; each person listened. We each passed the ivory piece to signify being done sharing. We also passed a box of Kleenex around! There was no time limit, no distraction with time. There were long pauses.

After one round of detailed sharing, the group intuitively went forward with a second round, effortlessly noting sources of strength and ways in which we heal. Participants related easily to one another; all were observant of temperament and interaction. As the second rotation concluded, participants had identified common elements around healing and strength. The

following presents a compilation of what emerged from the talking circle discussion in regards to healing and strength.

Ikayuq to help, assist, support (her/him/it)

The importance placed on support networks was highly valued. Though times of feeling isolated and ostracized were familiar, each participant had relationships that were especially helpful in times of need. Sisters, cousins, friends had all served as confidants, caretakers. Healing means giving ourselves attention, including allowing ourselves to be taken care of at times. Receiving help. Strength is finding the courage to ask and reach out for help. Speaking out implies the desire to change the situation. Often, fear of negative repercussion keeps victims silent. Navigating unknown consequences to speaking out is daunting. The presence of people who support survivors is essential in the process of breaking silence. Many stages of the pathway to healing include informal or formal advocates.

It is not within this paper to fully cover the role of advocates. However, whether it be family, friends, or designated people from organizations, finding strength from within is often patiently directed from an advocate. Longtime activist, lawyer and advocate Sarah Deer writes, “Advocates are 100 percent about the sovereignty of women” (Deer et al., 2008, p.196). Helping, supporting, providing and guiding; all help empower victims. Empowerment is not making decisions for victims, or telling them what to do. Actions like that only reinforce the cycle of control which they were in. Participants cited both informal and formal advocates in their lives.

The circle also noted that healing began with receiving help and support, but also progressed around to an indicator of wellness. Particularly, the group agreed that once healing began, the first thing they naturally do is to start serving and helping others; “It is what Native

people do,” said a participant. Giving weight to this is powerful. Morgan and Freeman (2009) write that healing is a renewable resource in the community, “...the more the healing is received, the more there is to give. In general, healing becomes continually available to all. It is easy to see that when healing is viewed as a gift that must be shared, it becomes empowering and moves people to their own power...” (p.90). This empowerment was described by a member of the circle; where she had once been a ‘doormat’ that was walked over; she became a ‘doorkeeper’ instead.

It is not my intention to take apart the stories of survival by categorization. However, identifying common components from stories of healing and strength can inform preventative and responsive strategies to violence. Though not all-encompassing to the experiences that were shared, these characteristics clearly emerged.

Ukpiqqutiqañiq *spirituality, belief, trust*

One participant shared an experience where she was being attacked outside in the middle of the street. Two people came and intervened, stopping the attack. The participant described that she is still unsure if they were actual people who helped, or angels from above.

Multiple participants identified with having a strong faith in God, the power of the Bible and scripture. Attending church and having a relationship with God were echoed testimonies to finding strength.

Two participants had powerful, vivid dreams that brought peace and guidance in their healing journey. Both dreams included beloved family members.

The role of spirituality, in various forms, emerged strongly as both a source of strength and part of the healing process. Interventions by a form of higher being were profound experiences shared in the stories during the talking circle. Spirituality in healing makes sense because incidences of DVSA (and often prolonged abuse) are more than physical assaults. Survivor Lisa Frink illustrated, “It felt like the perpetrator stole a part of my heart and spirit. For an Indian person, to have one’s spirit abused or stolen is as good as being dead” (Deer et al., 2008, p.115). Traumas such as this are an ‘illness to the soul’ (Napoleon 1996, Duran 2006). It is easily understood then that when survivors speak of healing and strength, that it includes restoring their spiritual being.

To become whole again is to have the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual beings in balance. One talking circle participant declared, “I just need me, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost- that’s a party right there!” Everyone laughed. This humorous remark demonstrates interconnectedness; affirmation in spirituality develops a healthy emotional being, finding humor. There were plenty of laughs with the tears during the talking circle. One participant noticed how essential humor is, saying, “We need it for our survival. It’s a survival skill”. It is no wonder that elders have included Humor as one of the Iñupiaq Values (Alaska Native Knowledge Network).

The holistic qualities of healing and strength emerged from the talking circle with ease. If we acknowledge that violence is an attack on the whole being, we can expect to need a holistic approach to healing. Having support networks, a spiritual core, and a sense of humor emanated as components to healing and strength. Though these stood out greatly in experiences of healing, physical and mental aspects were not excluded.

Timaagun *physically*, **Isummataagun** *mentally*

Sharing stories of survivorship are often placed from a physical perspective. Physical abuse, despite attempts to keep it hidden, is the most visible kind of abuse. Many are more cognizant of this type of abuse because we can see it and make visceral association from physical harm. Physical abuse, both battering and sexual assault, negatively affects the whole being. Physical assault is exhausting; it strains the nervous system and instills fear that puts one on mental edge. The goal in the project is to highlight the stories of healing from these incidences. Giving truth to the realities of violence is very important. They should not be overlooked or belittled. In this project, honoring those truths was fully practiced in the talking circle. No one's story was doubted, compared, or made less than. Each story was received and fully accredited as is.

In an effort to remain healing-centered, this paper will cover the select moments where participants were explicit in talking about physical healing. One example was eating traditional food. Yet, again, the interconnected piece of this was expressing how it really is 'soul food'. Nourishment of the body certainly contributes to building strength and working towards healing. It takes physical energy to care for one's various needs, especially after trauma. Secondly, the basic need of having a place to go, shelter, was mentioned by a few members. Whether it be through the women's shelter, or with friends and family, that security was essential for getting back on track. The last element that arose in the background associated with physical healing was sobriety. It should be clear that no level of intoxication justifies someone being abused or being taking advantage of. Likewise, intoxication does not give excuse to an abuser. The correlation here is that participants noted their ability to follow through and focus on taking care of themselves when not abusing alcohol and/or drugs. Healing is developing healthy coping

strategies. Substitute activities were not specifically identified in the talking circle. However, the photo activity illustrates what some of these might be.

Finally, creating a balanced reflection on the talking circle discussion, the aspect of mental healing is acknowledged. Mental health is greatly stigmatized. For this reason, people may not always directly share their experience in receiving help. It may also be hard to specifically decipher because mental and emotional interrelate with one another. An example during the talking circle that came up was fear. The high levels of experienced fear through various traumas ran deep. As mentioned above, having physical security helped eliminate the sense of fear; having a place to go, having shelter, having a home.

Another example with mental strength that was discussed was keeping the mind busy. Keeping busy included being physically and mentally busy. Going out and gathering local greens, or picking berries during the season were ways to keep physically busy but also mentally distracted. Some participants kept their hands busy through crafting. Sewing and beading were associated with not having to think about ‘things’ (abuse and trauma). Using a creative energy was helpful in passing time and having a sense of productivity at the end. These mental activities contributed to healing.

The talking circle was approached very openly to promote stories of healing and strength. It was not prompted to share experiences on healing from each of the four quadrants of the medicine wheel (physical, mental emotional and spiritual). Addressing violence and building strategies must include acknowledging the complex effects of abuse on the whole being. The negative impacts of abuse were very clear. However, this project took one more step using the power of sharing stories, giving testimony. Reflection on survivorship invited participants to

reframe their experience as a place of healing, strength and building resiliency. The organic space of the talking circle cultivated physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components to healing and strength. The experiences which were shared have much to offer on holistic healing, generating strength, and building resiliency. Because violence and trauma affect the whole being, healing requires holism. The stories naturally informed the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects to the themes. The second phase of the project, photovoice, visually presents participant's healing and strength stories.

Qinígaaq picture, photograph, painting (Photovoice activity)

Immediately following the first talking circle, participants were invited to be part of the photo activity for the project. Since the talking circle ended on the topics of healing and strength, some participants eagerly started thinking of what they would want to take pictures of, one started writing her ideas down! Each participant was given a fully charged digital camera with an empty memory card. Two participants needed assistance in using the cameras. Members of the talking circle voluntarily offered help. As a participant in the talking circles, I took part in photovoice as well.

The following are participant photographs that respond to the questions: *What does healing look like? Where do you find strength?* Those prompts were the simple instructions for the activity. There was no minimum or maximum pictures to take. The participants had roughly five days for the activity. The only order to the photographs are that they are grouped by participant, mostly in the order they were taken. Participants had the option to personally caption them. If they chose to, it is provided below the picture. If they did not provide a caption, but

shared why they took this photo, it will be labeled with ‘Comment:’, if the participant did not discuss their photo it will say ‘No Comment’.

Photos have been minimally edited. Leaving the photographs in their original form captures the viewpoint from the participant best. It was purposeful that no enhancing filters or borders have been added. Five participants took pictures. One participant did not wish to have their pictures shared in this project write up. Last, potentially identifying photographs have been exempt from this report to ensure confidentiality. However, all participants will receive a complete set of their photographs.



P1.1 Mother's love



P1.2 Tradition is healing



P1.3 Look to God



P1.4 Home is my safe place



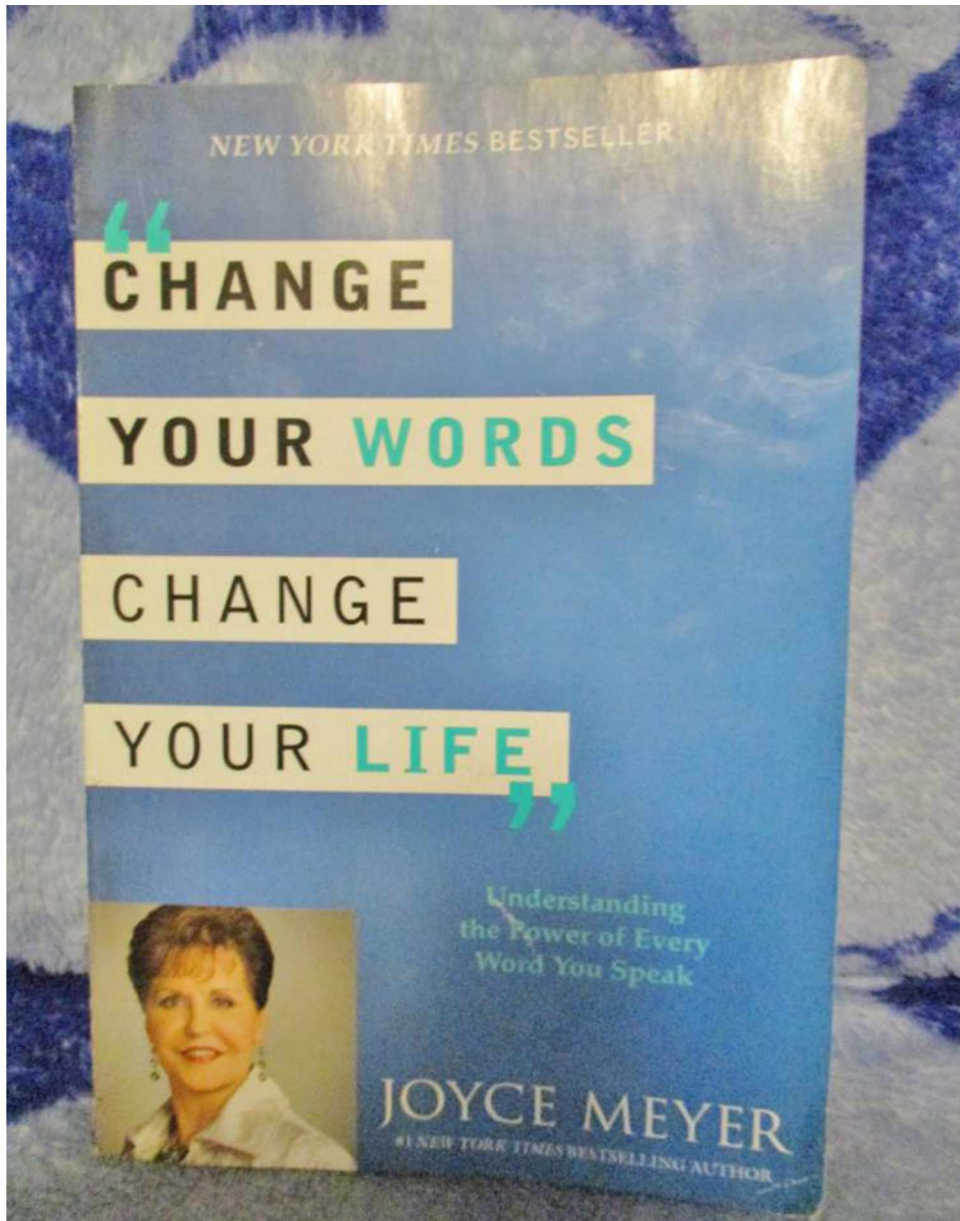
P1.5 Always loved



P1.6 Always loved



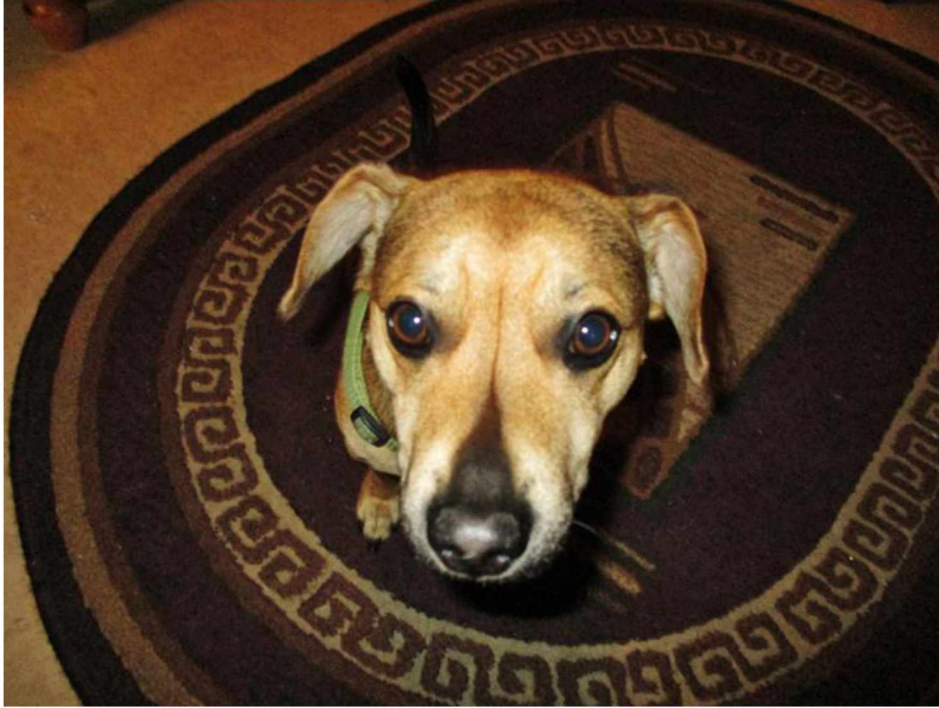
P1.7 Always loved



P2.1 Comment: Inspirational quotes



P2.2 Comment: Participant read this quote to a one year old and they laughed



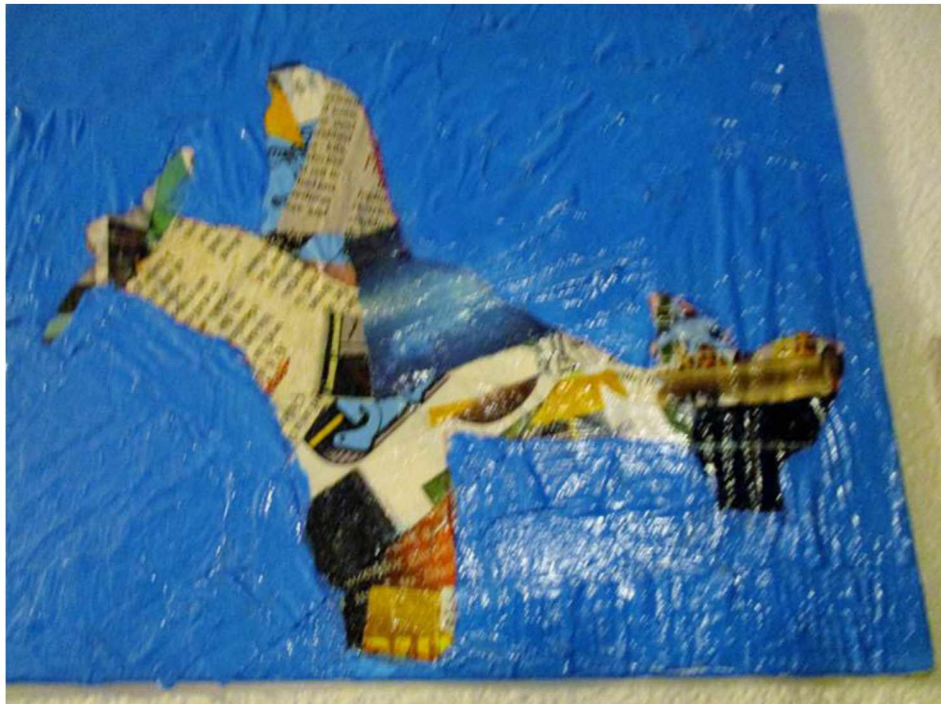
P2.3 I'm not as innocent as I look



P2.4 Comment: Participant enjoyed this show as a child



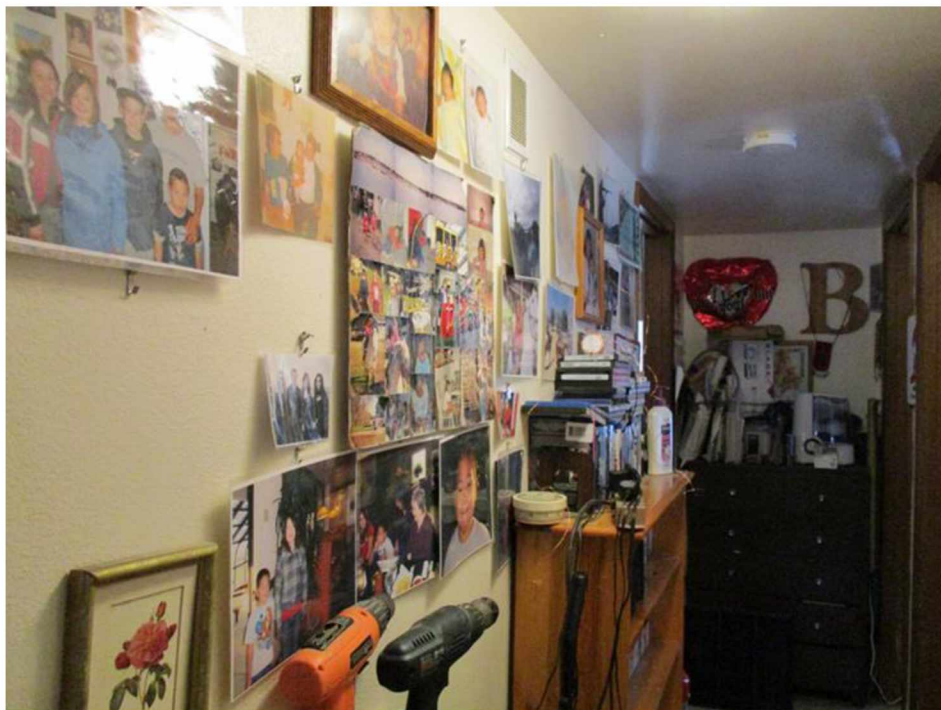
P2.5 Comment: Good memories



P2.6 Comment: The participant's son loves airplanes. He made this for her.



P2.7 Comment: When the participant lived out of state, they always missed home. They brought this picture of home with them as they travelled.



P2.8 Comment: Pictures of family



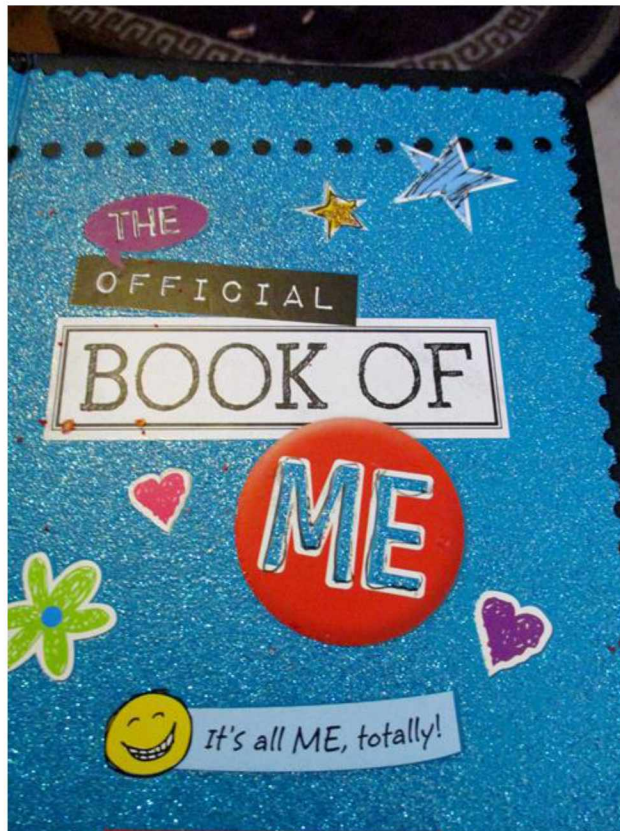
P2.9 Comment: Tibetan prayer flags



P2.10 Comment: The process of cleaning the fish tank is therapeutic



P2.11 Comment: Participant used to refuse to clean the fish tank. Now they will.



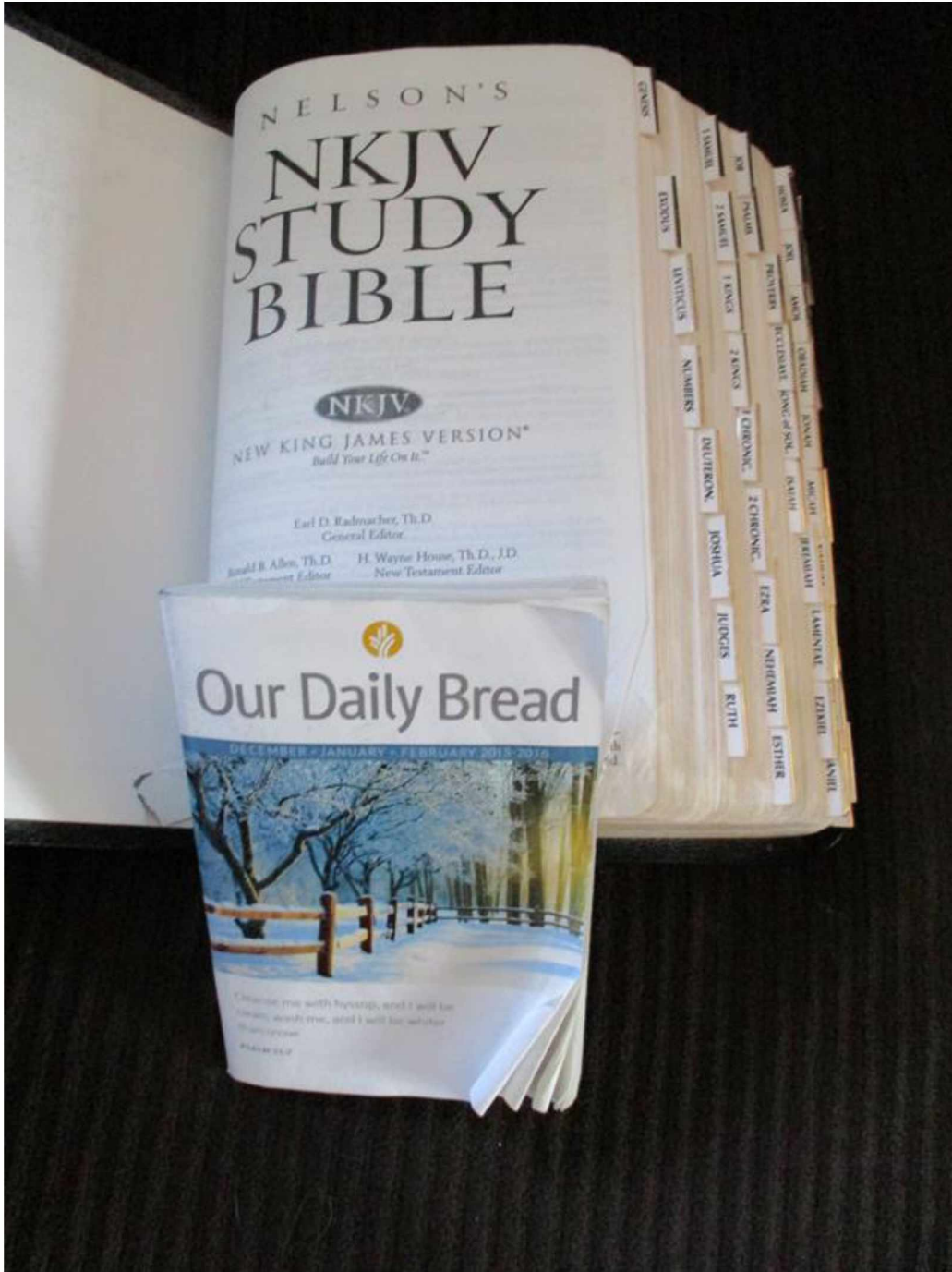
P2.12 Comment: Self-Care



P2.13 Comment: Beading keeps the hands busy and mind distracted



P2.14 Comment: Counting delica beads



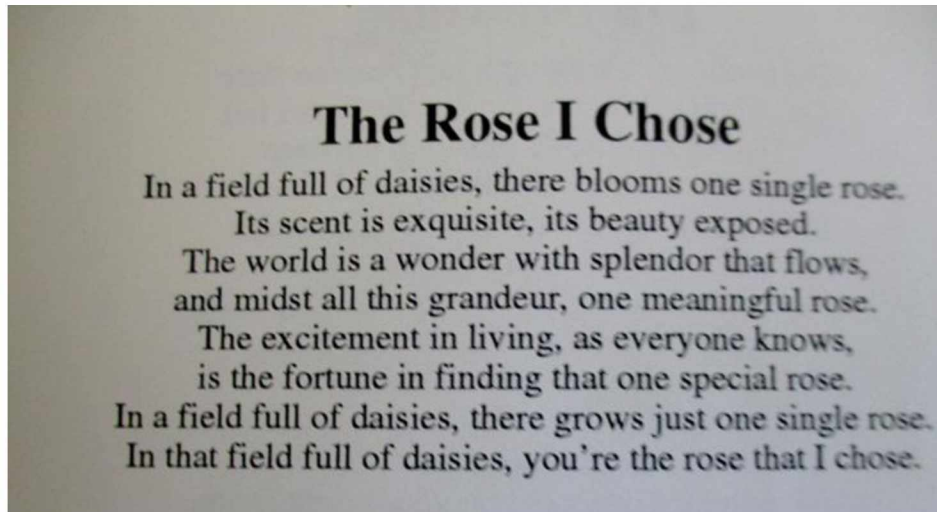
P2.15 Comment: Reading Scripture



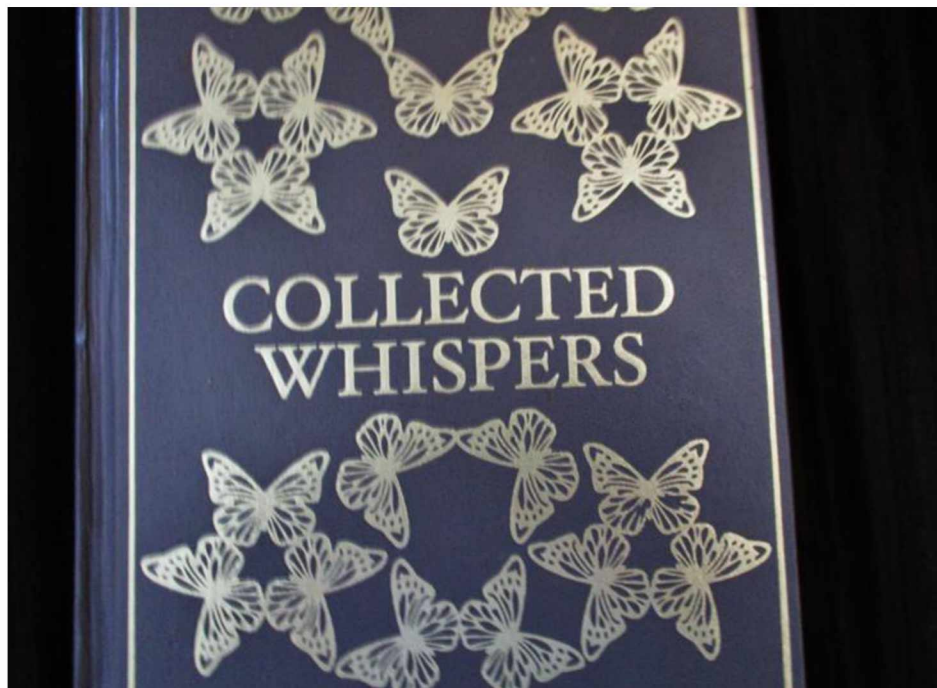
P2.18 Comment: A drawing of a lost sentimental item



P2.19 Comment: Drawing as a healing activity



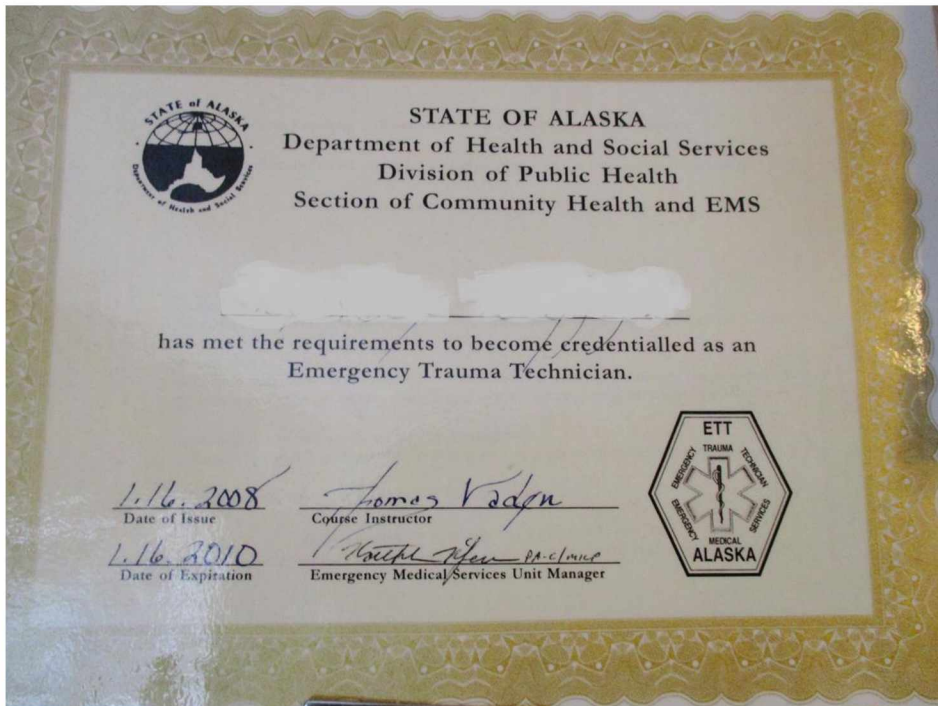
P2.20 Comment: Participant composed this poem. Signature removed



P2.21 Comment: Published poem



P2.22 Comment: Files of meaningful notes



P2.23 Comment: Very proud to have completed and followed through, have something on paper to show accomplishment (censored name)



P2.24 Comment: Gift from an Elder



P2.25 Comment: Gift from an Elder



P2.26 No Comment



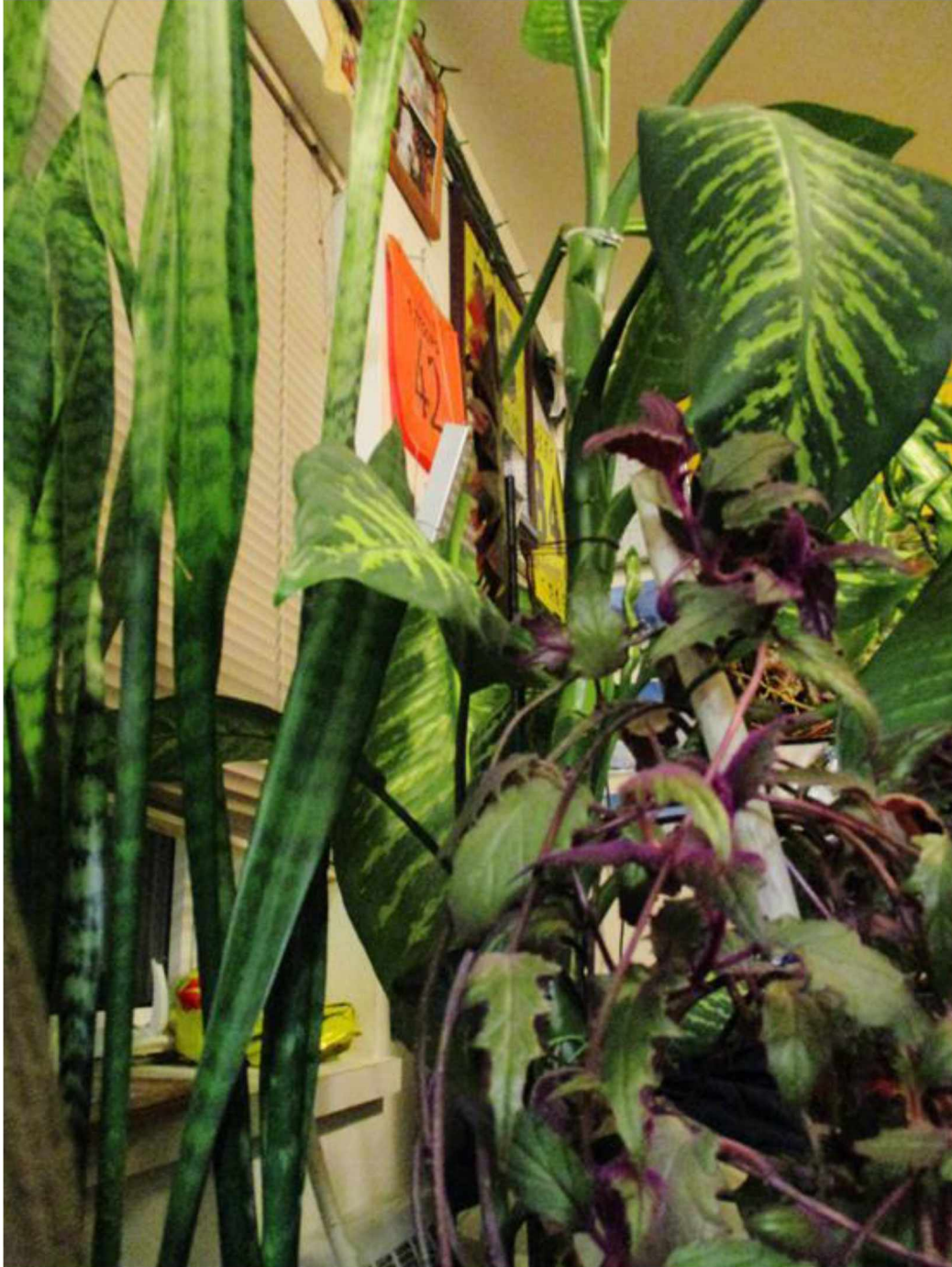
P2.27 Comment: Collect heart shaped rocks



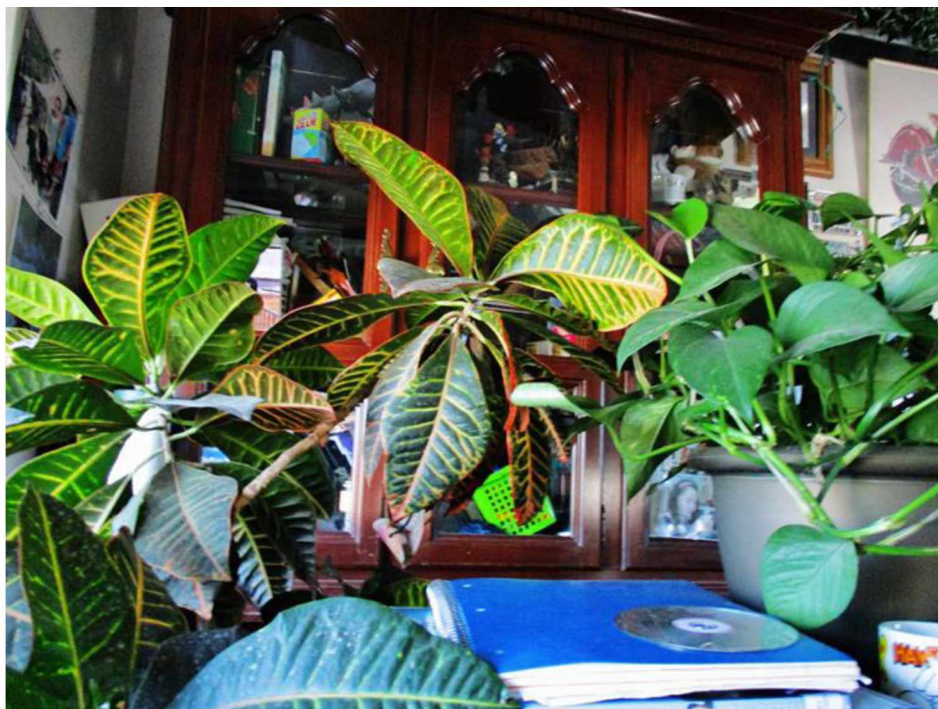
P2.27 No Comment



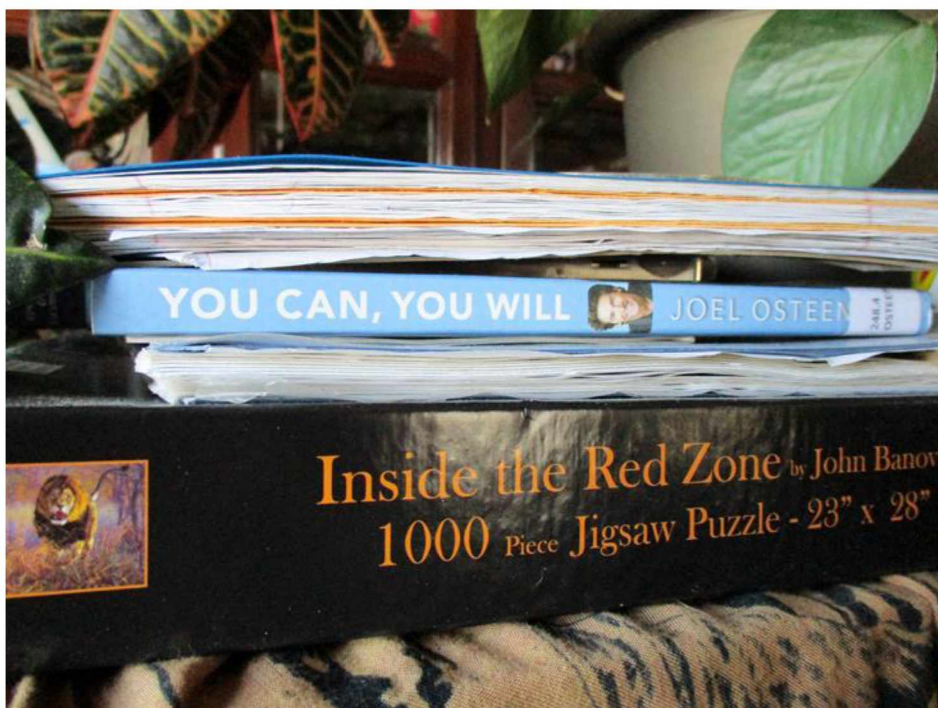
P2.28 No Comment



P2.29 Comment: Taking care of plants



P2.30 Comment: Caring for plants



P2.31 No Comment



P2.32 Comment: The kids hope to be on The Voice one day, asking how old they have to be to be to try out



P3.1 Running clears the mind



P3.2 Comment: An Elder told her to learn how to take care of a plant for healing. This plant belongs to the participant's aunt.



P3.3 One day I'll be able to do this



P3.5 Preparing our food is ceremony



P3.6 Drink water instead



P3.7 Comment: This represents a healing dream that brought peace



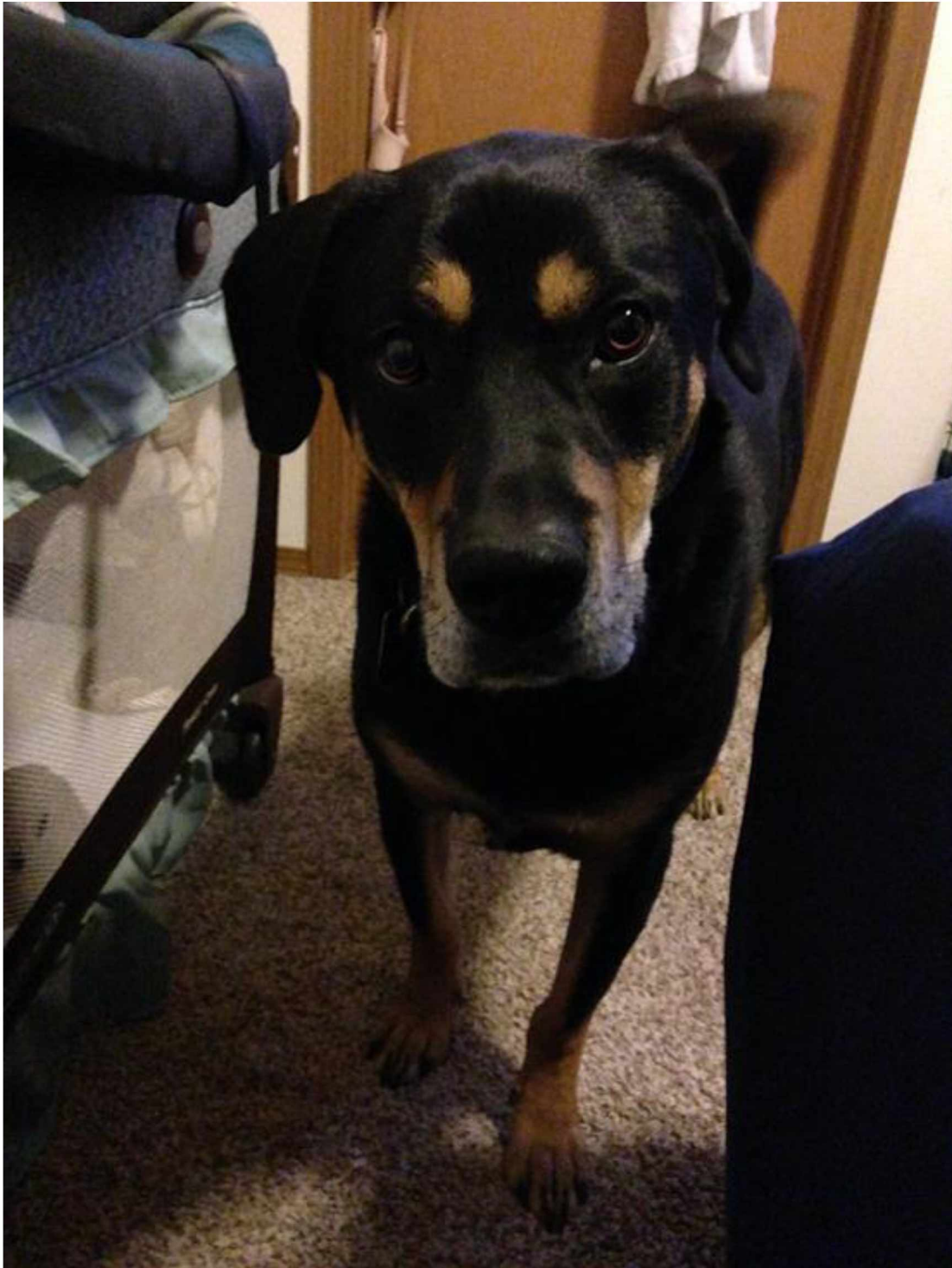
P3.8 Comment: Don't want to pass on trauma. Having children brought a sense of urgency to address healing.



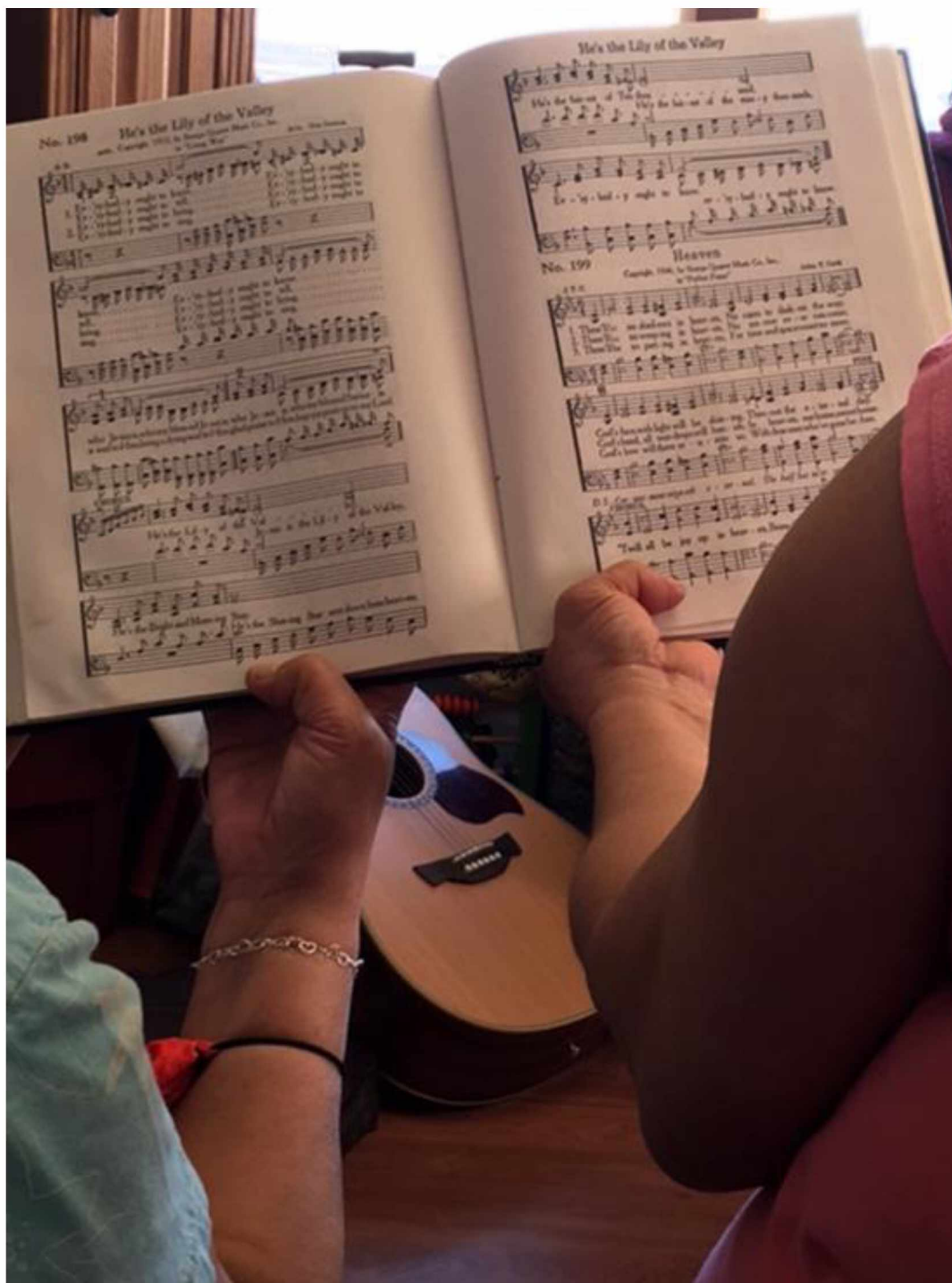
P3.9 Being connected to motherland and waters bring strength



P3.10 Comment: Finding a happy place to think of to stay strong



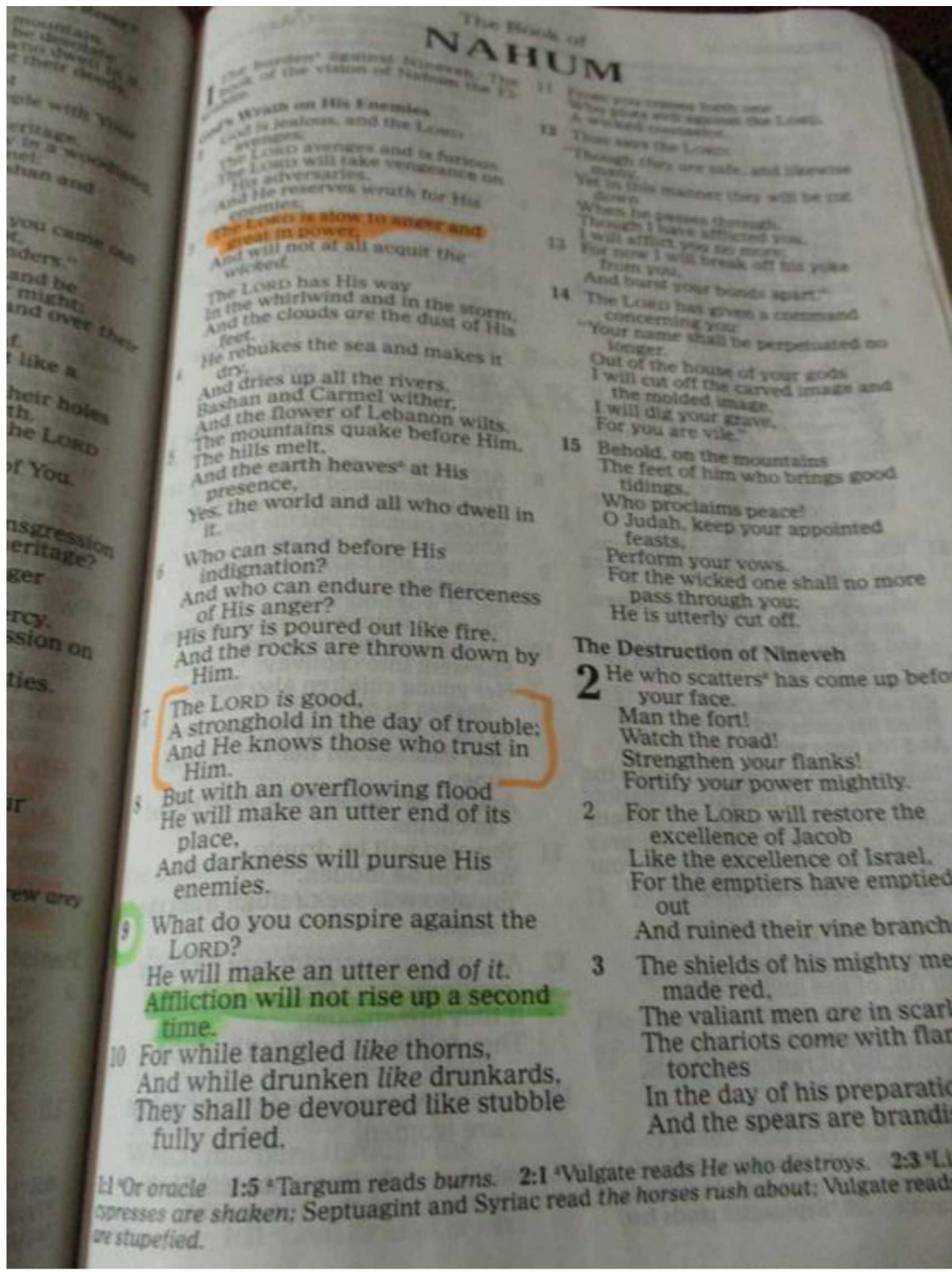
P3.11 The best companion and my protector



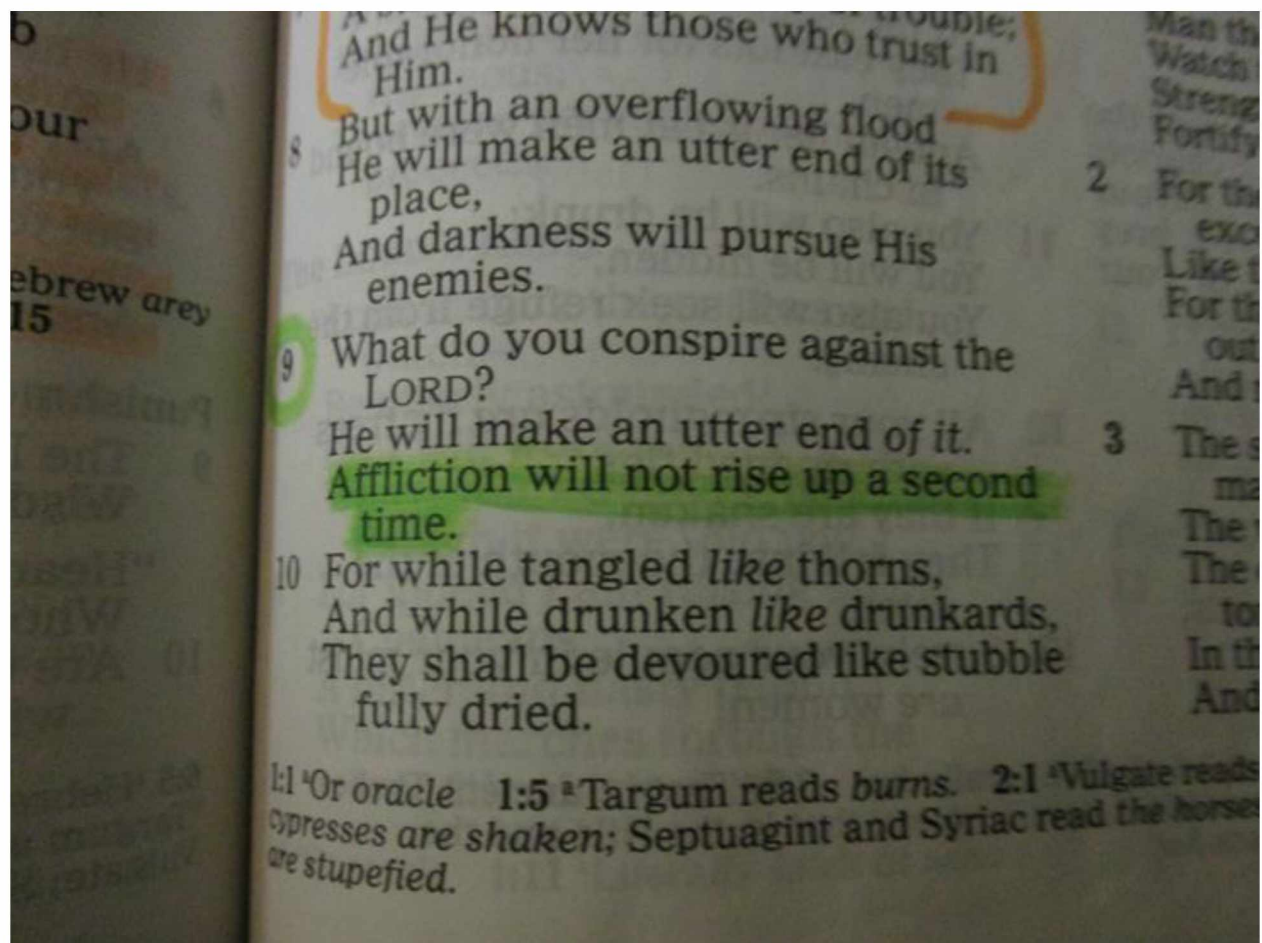
P3.12 Comment: Participant noticed family sings gospel to help heal



P3.13 Comment: Knitting qivut



P4.1 Comment: Book of Nahum, Chapter 1, Verse 9



P4.2 Comment: Affliction will not rise up a second time.

Iluaqsi to become well, to heal her/him/it (Second talking circle)

The second talking circle took place a week after the first. The goal of the second talking circle was to talk about the process of the photovoice activity. This meeting took place at the same location as prior. As the host, I again ensured that coffee and food were provided. We began as we had before, casually eating and conversing. Unfortunately, the group Elder was not able to attend this day.

There was also an additional attendee who had not come to the first talking circle or participated in the photo activity. We reintroduced ourselves and I gave a summary of the project. This person shared a little about herself and her interest in the talking circle. Because talking circles are meant to be open to anyone, the new member was invited to engage despite not being there prior. We reviewed that names and identifying stories would ‘stay in the circle,’ and not be shared. The circle commenced once a participant mentioned that they were thankful for the first talking circle. I took this reflection as a place to initiate the first round.

Participants expressed gratitude in being part of the first talking circle. They retold parts of their story, saying it was helpful to talk about it. Some expressed that it was the first time they spoke about certain experiences. A thoughtful comment about the process of ‘letting go’ resonated among the group. Topics of forgiveness, understanding, and healthy relationships were discussed. Each participant was in a different healing stage. As a whole, the group had experienced trauma from early in their lives through adulthood. Some had very recently experienced assault. Despite being in different positions of healing, the talking circle benefited each participant, and each participant contributed. It is clear that healing is not a destination or an end point. It is a constant. This was made apparent by the engagement of participants in the talking circle, what they had been through, and their willingness to share and to listen.

With the exception of the Elder, each original participant came to the second talking circle after doing the photo activity. The Elder expressed wanting to attend but family obligations took precedence. No one expressed regret or concerns in having participated the first one. In fact, it was desired that more would be done. Some asked when the next one would be. Someone who held Bible study at the correctional facility said there should also be talking circles because 'sometimes Bible study isn't what they need,' and that talking and cultural activities were important. She had mentioned that cultural activities at the men's jail, like carving, had been cut. Another request was to have talking circles with the women's half way house in Nome.

As the group completed the first round of reflection on the talking circle, it seemed appropriate to move towards discussing photovoice. All participants took pictures and returned the cameras before this meeting. I organized the photos so they could be viewed as a group; I collected the photos into one file, with spacers between participants and removed duplicates. In light of the additional member, I had privately confirmed if participants still wished to discuss their photos in the group. One participant requested that their photos not be viewed in the talking circle; this request, of course, was honored. Although this participant did not have their photos viewed, they contributed in listening, talking and sharing nonetheless. In the second round of the talking circle participants shared why they took the pictures they did, what they meant to them. They explained how the pictures represented healing and/or strength to them.

This activity was very powerful and heartfelt. The diversity of photo content was really telling. Images identified that places, people, objects and activities all contribute to healing and sources of strength. The photos symbolized many stories, memories, and reflections. The thoughtfulness around the project themes were extraordinary. Participants shared stories of

healing, self-affirmation, strength, and hope through the pictures they took. As seen, participants were able to express spirituality, support networks, cultural rootedness, just to name a few, through photography in their everyday lives. Many pictures represented good memories both long ago and in recent times. Some represented lessons learned from overcoming hardship. Photos that potentially could identify participants were not included in this report.

A sense of place was expressed in a myriad of ways. Some were pictures of home, the structural houses that represented safety. Others were reminders of home for times they were away. A sense of place was also connected to land and water. Scenic photos came up numerous times. Several omitted pictures (that are identifying) were of participants harvesting traditional foods; picking berries or preparing meat. This connection to place was interesting because of the transient nature of Nome. Most participants, though from small areas, had also previously lived in urban areas, if not the lower 48. So representation of the meaning of place was enriching, especially in the context of healing.

Again, spirituality was a reoccurring expression of healing and strength. Participants took pictures of the local church, scripture based readings, and meaningful passages from the Bible. Having faith through hardship brought much relief and gratitude for life's blessings. The church provides a sense of community when individuals may feel estranged. Meaningful scripture worked as a source of strength and guidance for participants. The pictures were accompanied by testimony to the power of having a strong spirituality.

The value of relations and their contribution to healing and strength was salient. The theme of family, ancestors passed, and future generations were all present. Pictures representing family members who showed unconditional love occurred with numerous participants (some

omitted for confidentiality). Several pictures were of partners, friends or counselors who participants trusted. Likewise, even ancestors who have passed remained important to participant's reflections on healing and strength. A small set of photos included younger generations. Future generations seemed to provide hope and determination to overcome challenges faced by participants.

Sentimental objects were reoccurring. Gifts, trinkets, and artwork were captured. These were attached to special people, places and/or memories. Really lovely stories emerged when participants explained these photos. Pets came up twice; both as excellent companions, moments of joy and even times of protection. Houseplants brought a good discussion on healing. Learning to take care of them, growing and nurturing something. Laughs ensued as some participants suggested cactus to others!

Finally, but not least, cultural activities were valued. Representation of sewing mukluks came up as acts of love. One participant proudly posed wearing their atikluks/kuspuks. Overlapping with a sense of place, participants had taken pictures of traditional foods as being important. The process of gathering them was illustrated in berry picking and butchering harvested animals. Similarly, preparing and sharing traditional foods was ceremonial. Beading, knitting qivut (under wool of musk ox) and drawing were creative cultural practices of healing.

The talking circle went full circle through sharing photographs. There was exchanged dialogue, comments, and interjections, unlike the first talking circle. Although this talking circle didn't follow the format during the second round, it was an energetic activity and the participants seemed to take pride in sharing their pictures and stories. There were enthusiastic "I like that idea!" or "I'm glad you brought that up!" and "that reminds me of..." remarks. The talking circle

still felt like reciprocal exchange, even in light of the additional member because everyone was still able to share at their own comfort level.

We ended the circle with handing the cameras with their memory cards back to the participants. I informed them they could all keep their cameras. Two of the participants had tears of joy and disbelief. It was obvious that the photovoice activity had meant a lot to them, as was evident in their photographs and sharing. This included the participant who did not share her pictures with the group. In fact, they wanted group pictures on their new cameras. We took pictures on their cameras and they discussed how to print pictures from home.

Having the new member worked out nicely because there were three gift baskets and three participants aside from Bering Sea Women's Group leader and the Elder. It was an honor to thank the BSWG leader for her longtime support of the project by gifting a blanket. Likewise, the Elder was visited that evening and given thanks with another blanket. This left the three participants with three baskets. We wrote their names on paper, mixed them in a cup, and randomly assigned a gift basket. These were much appreciated but even more of a privilege to give.

Tuvraq to follow, track her/him/it; to imitate, portray, copy, her/him/it= e.g. a sewing pattern, instructions to build something

Where promising results are found, the desire to replicate or reproduce ensues. In western academia, replicability is an important consideration in validating work. From an indigenous lens, universality is not always assumed (Kovach, 2009, p.47) and reproducibility can appear constraining. However, there are shared values that can translate into academia and be applied

here and potentially inform other works. Before detailing how this project may be replicated, it is necessary to acknowledge limitations.

One limitation of this project's methodology is that it can only accommodate a small number of participants. Ideal talking circles are between five and ten participants. To increase participation, numerous talking circles could be held. A series of talking circles could have generated more data with strong patterns to the themes. This project only held the two talking circles. And of course, more participants may have generated new topics not covered.

The project weighed the potential risks and benefits to being directed at women only, or women and men. Continually through the process, the need for healing among women and men was made clear, especially if a true attempt to prevent and respond to violence were to be done. This concern made sense in an indigenous view of balance. However, there were clear conflicts present in conducting mixed gender talking circles, especially in a small community. With guidance from the BSWG, the project remained open to women and men. Despite the open invitation, no men participated in the project. This may have been best when considering the themes from survivorship. It is not to say a men's voice would not be valuable on these themes. Indeed, there are many men who have experienced traumas. It is only to say that co-ed circles with these themes in particular may have unhealthy dynamics; hindering safe spaces of sharing. The project only worked with women on highlighting the themes. A men's perspective would have added great value to the themes of healing, strength and resiliency.

Working within community rhythm was also a limitation, affecting the noted count of participation. Despite the project efforts to have the community chose the timeframe, a less busy

time of year may have worked better. Middle of winter may have been a better time when many are not travelling or attending events.

A final consideration is that the project did not require anything to be produced. The fourth option of having a gallery/showing was not desired by the participants. This was not a requirement because the focus was on the activity benefitting the participants. However, the value of producing something for others in the community may have been meaningful. Seeing the pride taken in sharing their photographs, suggests that having a gallery/showing may have been an enriching outcome of the talking circles and photovoice work.

Aside from the listed limitations, the project has much to offer. One, in developing methodologies for indigenous scholars, the project encourages integration of identity, cultural values, crediting subjectivity while removing boundaries created by a commitment to objectivity. A well-known challenge for indigenous scholars is navigating work within your own community. The tension of doing this is often highly felt because of the clashing of cultural values. Dedication to keeping ones' indigenous worldview center in research guides methods and cares for community. Following indigenous values while initiating research will steer meaningful community centered work. As this project demonstrates, there is much to be gained by remaining culturally rooted through practice of values in the academic sphere. This includes making clear the values and worldview that inform the way a project is done. Academically, it demands that indigenous epistemologies utilize indigenous methods. Contemplating what this looks like can be challenging. As some grapple in merging two (or more) worlds together, use of indigenous scholarship provides a framework to build on. Merging multiple knowledge bases to create meaningful work can then be done while utilizing an indigenous worldview. This first item

addresses the underlying values of methodology and selecting methods. The values must align properly for the methods to be utilized.

If replicability is desired in using the methods of talking circle and/or photovoice, the following steps can be taken. For talking circles, familiarize yourself with the foundational principles because these carry the potential benefits in holding talking circles. If these principals are agreeable, (as they move from individualism and more towards collectivism, away from hierarchies and more towards reciprocal exchange) then commit to identifying protocol. This project used the guidance of an Elder, clockwise rotation, significant object to signal turns, and honoring of safe sharing. Talking circles rotate until all have consensus. This means time must be flexible. If considering talking circles, keep in mind that they are not for observation; all must concede to participation. This method requires minimal tools but strong relations and personal commitment.

The other method of photovoice can be replicated, but is very flexible. In fact, this project looked to other photovoice projects and then formed how it would fit best into the project goals. The website photovoice.org provided many helpful documents and projects which use the method. The various projects produced different mediums. For example, post cards, presentations, exhibitions, etc. The use of the photographs is near endless, but should be aligned with giving back to the participants. The method of photovoice is herald because it has been utilized to empower participants.

Conducting a photovoice project requires a fair amount of preparation and materials. Icebreaker activities for the group should be considered. This project used talking circles to gain traction in talking about the themes. But if photovoice is used alone, prepare discussion

meetings. In advance, be ready to give instruction on the mechanics of using the cameras. Assume complete unfamiliarity. Acquire funding or means to rent, purchase, borrow cameras for participant use. This also means planning for how many you will need. You may consider limiting the number of participants so enough materials are provided. Photovoice is sometimes used as a medium for conducting interviews. Interviews require other materials, for example, recorders, questions, notebooks, etc. Digital photography is popular, so having appropriate technology to upload, save, edit, and print what is being produced should be planned for. One example of this that arose during this project was that the cameras did not come with memory cards, these needed to be purchased separately. Additionally, since my computer had a photo program with the tools I needed, it was not necessary to download a software program. However, if advanced editing is desired, look into program options.

For both methods, as in all academic research, appropriate Institutional Review Board approval should be obtained. This process is inclusive of having a consent form for participants.

Piyuminaqtuḡa *I have hope, I am hopeful*

The cycle of this project has demonstrated healing, strength and resiliency to be multifaceted. Looking back at the formation of this project, it required a delineated approach. Enhancing formal education with personal experience and sense of purpose drove the underlying values that would be used. This project has been described as a cycle. It was constantly in motion, a spiral, gaining more information, support and meaning. Being personally reflexive in the process of indigenous scholarship also felt like a cycle. I applied my formal education to my indigenous worldview to serve my community. I felt I learned much along the way. Yet since the project became realized, I have been overwhelmed with a sense of humility. It is absolutely

humbling to have been graced with the presence of the participants and their stories. Here, I am struck by the title ‘Research is Ceremony’ (2008) by indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson.

The project approach privileged the indigenous perspective, honoring relations and remaining committed to the assets within our communities. It relied on the fundamental belief that our people, our cultures, have the tools to prevent and respond to the issue of violence in our communities. Founded on this notion, the project selected methods that would highlight healing, strength and resiliency.

Focusing on healing and strength is a powerful alternative to deficit approaches. Yup’ik writer Harold Napoleon (1996) insists that our people must address issues related to trauma, such as DVSA, at the individual and family level first (p.25). This is opposed to having top-down approaches. Similarly, guiding words that resonated in creating this project were that ‘We cannot continue to develop as a people (Alaskan Natives) unless we take the time to heal’. We will be stifled, limited, until we heal. As discussed earlier in regard to talking circles, Morgan and Freeman (2009) write how healing is a renewable resource within our communities (p.90). When we nurture it, it grows, it is shared. And finally, the most powerful lesson on the limitless bounds of healing are shared in the words of Yu’pik Grandmother, Rita Pitka Blumenstein (International Council of Thirteen Grandmothers):

We are free to be who we are—
to create our own life
out of the past and out of the present.
We are our ancestors.
When we can heal ourselves,

we also heal our ancestors,
our grandmothers, our
grandfathers and our children.

When we heal ourselves, we heal mother earth.

The wise words from Rita teach us the breadth of investing in healing. So not only have we demonstrated that healing is found within our local communities and cultures, but it is renewable, and intergenerational. Because of these qualities, this project set up conduits to highlight what our people know about healing, strength and resilience. Holistic ways of healing and strength emerged through the sharing of story. Just as teachings from the circle – where the completion of this project nears off, a sense of new beginning is introduced. In this way, there is much hope.

References

- Alaska Native Knowledge Network. *Iñupiat Iitqusiat: Iñupiaq cultural values*. Retrieved from <http://ankn.uaf.edu/ancr/Values/inupiaq.html>
- Apok, C. (2013). *Storytelling is Healing* (unpublished thesis 2013). University of Washington, Seattle.
- Apok, C. (2014). *Kiñuniñmi: To be at home* (unpublished coursework 2014). University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks.
- Archibald, J. A. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC press.
- City-data (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.city-data.com/city/Nome-Alaska.html>
- Coetzee, A., Dabrowska, A., Hockton, P. & Fairey, T. (2008). *Change the Picture: Photography with Vulnerable Women*. Photovoice.org. London.
- Deer, S., Clairmont, B., Martell, C. A., & Eagle, M. L. W. (Eds.). (2007). *Sharing our stories of survival: Native women surviving violence*. Rowman Altamira.
- Duran, E. (2006). *Healing the soul wound: Counseling with American Indians and other native people*. Teachers College Press.
- International Council of Thirteen Grandmothers. Blumenstein, Rita Pitka. Retrieved from <http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org/who-we-are/grandmother-rita-pitka-blumenstein-2>
- Kovach, M. (2009) *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Lardeau, M. P., Healey, G., & Ford, J. (2011). The use of Photovoice to document and characterize the food security of users of community food programs in Iqaluit, Nunavut. *Rural Remote Health, 11*(1680), 1-17.
- Morgan, R., & Freeman, L. (2009). The healing of our people: Substance abuse and historical trauma. *Substance Use & Misuse, 44*(1), 84-98.
- Moya, E. M., Chávez-Baray, S., & Martinez, O. (2014). Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Health Voices and Images of Latina Immigrant Survivors in Southwestern United States. *Health promotion practice, 15*24839914532651.
- Napoleon, H. (1996). *Yuyyaraq: The Way of the Human Being*. Madsen, E. (Ed.). Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Knowledge Network.
- North Slope Borough Division on Iñupiat History, Language and Culture. 2013. Iñupiat Word Finder. (1.1.1) Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com>
- Photovoice & World Vision. (2011). *PhotoVoice's Statement of Ethical Practice*. Retrieved from https://photovoice.org/methodologyseries/method_05/links.htm
- Photovoice & World Vision. (2011). *See it our way- Key themes*. Retrieved from https://photovoice.org/methodologyseries/method_05/links.htm
- Photovoice & World Vision. (2011). *Visual Literacy*. Retrieved from https://photovoice.org/methodologyseries/method_05/links.htm
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health education & behavior, 24*(3), 369-387.
- Wilson, S. *Research Is Ceremony*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing, 2008. Print.

APPENDIX A

Kisitchisit numerals; numbers (Data)

My efforts to grasp the rates and incidences of violence against American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) women were explored in a pilot study grant from the American Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Washington. My honors thesis, *Storytelling is Healing* (Apok, 2013) provided a foundational merging of an indigenous perspective on the topic in academia. The thesis literature review exposed gaps where AIAN women are underserved despite the disproportionate rates in which they experience violence. *Storytelling is Healing* proposed reconnecting to values through storytelling as a way to prevent and respond to violence. This prior work made apparent to me that serving my Alaska Native communities would best emerge from cultural rootedness instead of quantitative surveys or assessments. From here, advocacy and scholarship within an indigenous framework have led to this project.

It is already known that DVSA exists at staggering rates in AIAN communities. On the national level, AIAN women have a 50% higher rate of DVSA than all other ethnicities and one third will be raped in their lifetime compared to one fifth for women as a whole in the U.S (Futures Without Violence 2000). Within the state of Alaska, a baseline survey found that nearly 60% of women will experience intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime (Samaniego, 2010). A small yet significant study by Magen and Wood (2006) done in the Copper River Basin shows devastating data that two thirds of Athabascan women experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime and had rates eight times above the national level and three times higher than AIAN women as a whole. The compounded factors of marginalized populations in a rural setting are heavily felt by rural Alaska Native communities.

While a comprehensive AIAN, rural Alaska-only report has yet to be conducted, another survey is not needed for our rural communities to know this is an issue. The tribal community has long recognized this issue and demanded more attention in policy and legislation. Political strife soared in 2013 when the renewal of Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) failed to protect the 229 Alaskan Native tribes. Alaskan leadership took heavy criticism for missing the opportunity to include Alaskan Native tribes (Benson, 2013; Demer, 2013, Moore, 2013), which would allocate desperately needed funding to aid communities and allow greater legal protections. Additionally, initiatives such as Governor Parnell's 'Choose Respect' lacked consultation, partnership or recognition of existing tribal efforts. Power dynamics between indigenous communities and external entities' programs have historically created a finger pointing relationship where paternalistic approaches with tribes prescribe foreign, and largely ineffective, ways to address violence. This is evident in the consistent high prevalence and reiterated in research. "Western/European interventions... have been identified as generally ineffective in responding to the needs of Aboriginal peoples" (Quinn, 2007, p.75). Further, "We cannot depend on outsiders to tell us what the problem is or how to address it... The only method that can work is our traditional method of teaching and learning" (Deer et al., 2008, p.79). The sense of inadequacy from external approaches leave a sense of hopelessness, requiring communities to look within. The numbers, though shocking, cannot illustrate the hurt, pain, and soul-breaking that they represent. Community-centered healing is an alternative way to addressing violence. Internal resourcing requires acknowledgment of embedded traumas, and healing from those. A deeper understanding of impacts from colonization and historical trauma from the indigenous experience must direct healing strategies.

Iłagiigñiq *relationship* (Gender lens)

As defined by the United Nations in the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence, DVSA is gender-based violence. It states “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (Article 1). Health and Human Rights Info further explains, “Gender-based violence has become an umbrella term for any harm that is perpetrated against a person’s will, and that results from power inequalities that are based on gender roles” (www.hhri.org). This terminology frames violence as a consequence of unequal social constructions about gender. Instead of relegating these forms of violence into binary incidences between men and women, this framework recognizes the reality of fluid gender identity while citing associated inequalities that have been constructed around them.

Understanding acts of violence that are linked to gender power inequalities enables us to assess the origins. This platform is especially pertinent for AIAN communities whose cultures have been negatively impacted by the western binary construction of gender. Part of my coursework in the Department of Alaska Native Studies & Rural Development M.A. program included RD 655 Circumpolar Health Issues. My effort for this class was to connect gender constructions to health and wellbeing in the Circumpolar North. I composed a paper titled *Tracking Indigenous Masculinities* (Apok, 2015), which explores the impacts of western influence on indigenous community constructs of gender. My paper demonstrates that many indigenous communities have multiple-gender or fluid constructs around gender. Further, these versatile constructs were egalitarian. Egalitarian relations between genders kept balance and prevented violence. Values of healthy relations were taught through stories and rites of passage.

Specifically among Inuit, Jessen Williamson's work (2011) points to language, spirituality, and namesake practices as evidence of a 'genderless' society prior to contact.

These practices were forcibly removed through colonization and replaced with unequal gender constructs. The societal changes of gender relations shifting under colonization have resulted in disharmony and violence against women. Another notable connection for indigenous communities in regards to gender-based violence is articulated by Lee Maracle (2012) who asserts that dispossession of land, and violence against the earth is directly linked to violence against women. Gender constructs are one of many changes that destabilized indigenous societies and their ability to respond. The effects of colonial attempts to assimilate indigenous people are felt through health disparities, including DVSA, high suicide rates, alcohol and drug abuse, and continued social, economic, and political marginalization. Research on the impacts of colonization are being articulated through health using the framework of historical trauma (HT) and intergenerational historical trauma (IHT).

Pilluk *to survive danger, to escape death, to survive illness* (HT & IHT framework)

Using HT and IHT frameworks is significant in addressing and responding to DVSA, especially with intent of working towards a pathway of healing. Yup'ik writer, Harold Napoleon (1996) articulates the Alaska Native experience of 'The Great Death' where his people lost their way of being, *Yunyaraq*, since contact. His descriptions contextualize contemporary 'survivors' and their internalized 'illness of the soul' passed from their ancestor's experiences. Other emerging scholarship connects past generations of trauma to present challenges faced by AIAN communities. Braveheart, Chase, Elkins and Altschul (2011: 283) write that "*Historical trauma* (HT) is defined as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma." The unresolved grief from

trauma is passed from generation to generation; this transmission is referred to as intergenerational historical trauma. Evans-Campbell (2008) demonstrates the impacts of HT and IHT at the individual, family, and community level among AIAN people. Current epigenetic work is beginning to show the visceral reality of transmitted trauma whereas, “cultural practices, including languages, educational systems, spirituality, and the daily practices of everyday life were systematically attacked, oppressed or outlawed.” (Walters et al., 2011: 181). Works such as these bring context to the challenges faced by AIAN people; DVSA being a complex issue that requires healing multiple layers of trauma. Napoleon (1996: 25) suggests that Alaska Native people must face these challenges at the individual and family level first. Specifically, he insists that “... survivors must also speak... They too must share with us their life stories, leaving nothing out, the good and the bad, because their experiences are ours... *those whose hearts are with their people should institute Talking Circles,*” [emphasis added] (Napoleon, 1996: 25 & 28).

It has been a journey gathering and absorbing writing on the topics of AIAN DVSA, healing, community-based research, and indigenous methodologies, to name a few. In addition to the readings, courses in the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development M.A program have consistently allowed me to explore in depth components through writing. Community Healing and Wellness, fall 2014, offered the space to write a reflective piece on healing. This paper, *Kijunigmi- to be at home* (Apok 2014) was done in response to my travels back home, the project location. The course Native Women Surviving Violence, fall 2015, was especially pertinent. The practice of gaining deeper understanding in the research process while cycling it into responsibility to relations has epitomized that ‘Research is Ceremony’ (Wilson 2008). I have been blessed with many mentors who continually direct me to ask the right questions. Of utmost importance has been the feedback and support from those in the community

of Nome. The presented frameworks, with survivors in mind, have shaped to process of choosing this project's methods; talking circles and photovoice.

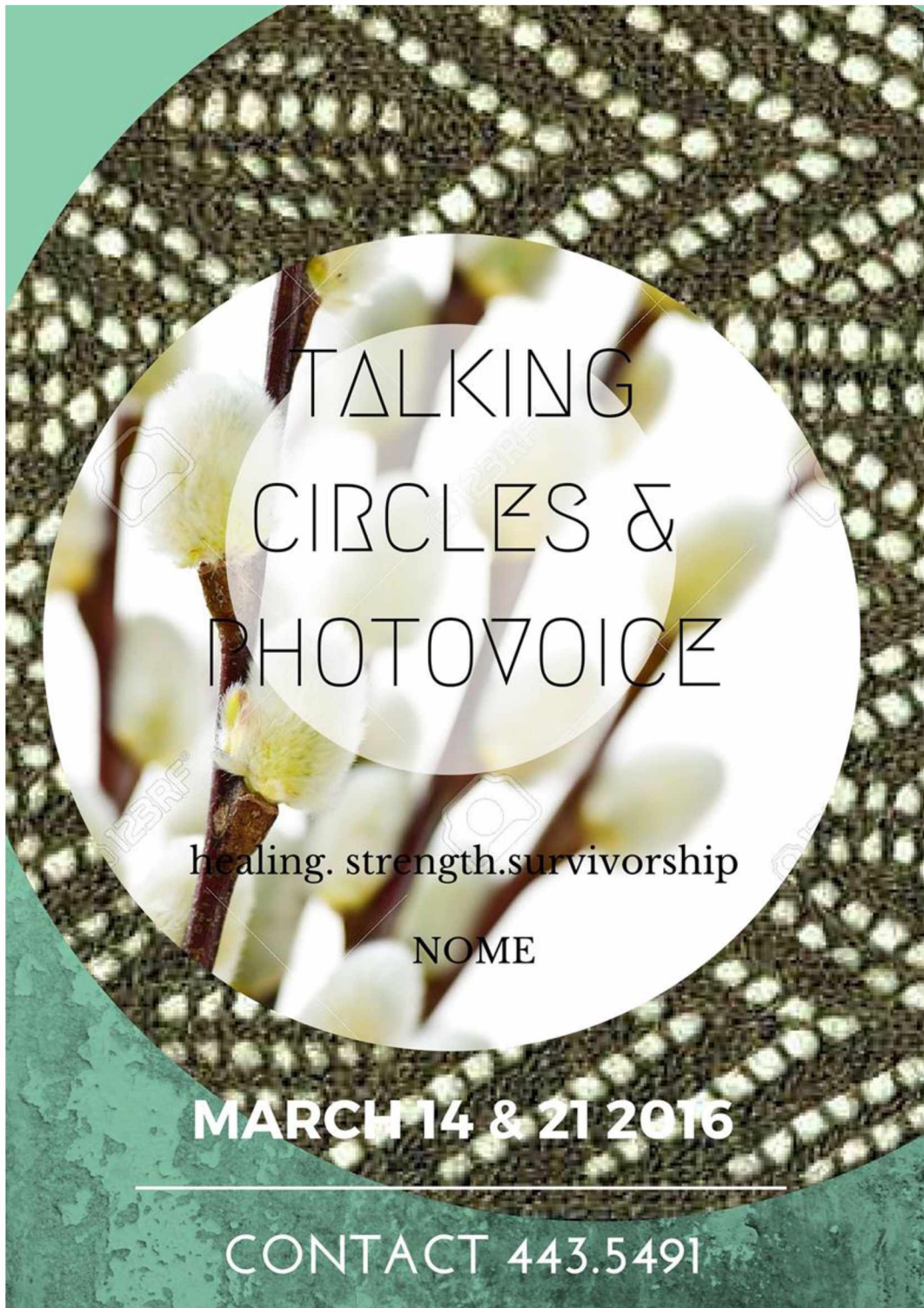
TALKING CIRCLES & PHOTOVOICE



HEALING, STRENGTH & SURVIVORSHIP

MARCH 14 & 21 6pm NOME, AK

443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491	443-5491
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------



TALKING
CIRCLES &
PHOTOVOICE

healing. strength. survivorship

NOME

MARCH 14 & 21 2016

CONTACT 443.5491