Welcome

New Teacher Handbook
Welcome to YKSD

Welcome to the Yukon-Koyukuk School District. This handbook has been designed to answer crucial questions you may have and to prepare you for life teaching in interior Alaska.

We hope you enjoy your upcoming school year. Individual questions about each site may be addressed at the new teacher in-service, which is held in Fairbanks at the district office prior to the beginning of school.

This guide is not meant to replace your Teacher Handbook, which was designed to inform you about school district policies and regulations.
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Enaa neenyo. “I'm glad you came.” Welcome to the Yukon-Koyukuk School District. We're excited to have you join our teaching staff.

The Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) is within the Yukon-Koyukuk Census area, an area that is contained in the Yukon and Koyukuk River Valleys. Overall, the District encompasses nearly 65,000 square miles. The total population in the area is just over 6,000 people.

The YKSD serves nine villages. The estimated enrollment for 2011-2012 is 300 students in K-12. The district office is located in Fairbanks, which is located in the interior of Alaska.

The district also sponsors a statewide correspondence program called Raven Correspondence School serving 1,100 students statewide.

It is possible to travel by road to Minto and Manley Hot Springs. The other seven villages can only be reached by air or river travel (boats in the summer and snow machines in the winter).
"Look’a tr’et’oth. ‘We are cutting fish.’ Minto students learn how to cut dog salmon at Old Minto during the fall camp.

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Our Schools

The school is a major gathering place in each community. As a teacher, you will be encouraged to participate in community events. The community involvement in each school varies by site and/or event.

All of the classes are multi-age. The larger schools may have two grades in one class, and the smaller sites may have 3-5 grades in one class. In addition to multi-age, the skill level in each grade may vary from far below grade level to far above grade level.

Prior to the end of each school year, a plan is made that details which teachers will teach which subjects. It will be a good idea to find out which subjects you will teach prior to your arrival. The sites may decide to have the language arts and math/science teachers teach both junior and senior high.

The school district is governed by a regional Board of Education. They meet seven times a year, with meetings rotating between the villages and Fairbanks.

Each school has a Community Schools Committee, which provides advisement on local decisions such as event planning and the school calendar.

Support staff at each site varies, depending upon size. Each has daily janitorial/maintenance service. Major maintenance is served out of the district office.

Itinerant teaching staff travel to most of the villages. The counselors often serve 2-3 sites. Some sites have an on-site special education teacher. The Special Education Director serves the remaining villages.

A Speech Pathologist, Technology Director, and Language Coordinator serve all sites. An on-site Teacher is trained to provide technological assistance. The administrators (Superintendent, Directors and Coordinators) travel to the sites on a regular basis. The Library/Media Coordinator is available to send materials out to sites.
Each site has two-way video-conferencing capabilities. Biology, Art, and Native Language courses will be offered each semester. These courses are taught primarily by a distance delivery instructor, but requires some on-site teaching assistance.
Allakaket School—Allakaket

Allakaket is located on the Koyukuk River approximately 190 air miles northwest of Fairbanks. There are two villages – Allakaket, predominantly Koyukon Athabascan and Alatna, predominantly Kobuk Inupiaq Eskimo. Alatna is located 3 miles downriver on the opposite side of the river from Allakaket.

There are four classrooms: grades K-1, 2-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The Principal teaches a couple of the courses. There are also Teacher Aides who have been with the district for several years.

Teacher housing is located right next to the school. Some houses are quite small. Allakaket received one new duplex in 2008. Renting a home from the community may be an option.

The old townsite is near the school. A new townsite is located about two miles away from the school. There is a local school bus. Students have lunch at the school. There are two stores, one in the old townsite and one in the new. The airport is located mid-way between the townsites.
The Johnny Oldman school is located in Hughes, on the Koyukuk River, 57 miles upriver from Allakaket. The community is predominantly Koyukon Athabascan. The school is in the middle of the community, with close access to the airport, post office and store.

There are two classrooms: grades K-5, 6-12. There are Teacher Aides who have been with the district for one year or more. The secondary classroom houses the computer lab, the library, kitchen, and video conferencing equipment. Students go home for lunch.

Two teacher housing units, built in 2006 are located right next to the school.
The Jimmy Huntington School is located in Huslia, on the Koyukuk River, 290 air miles west of Fairbanks. The community is predominantly Koyukon Athabascan. The school is located in the middle of the community.

There are six classrooms: grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12 (two). Most of the elementary teaching staff have been there for numerous years. The secondary staff were all new in 2008-2009. There are Teacher Aides in the classrooms who have also been with this school for several years. Students go home for lunch.

Teacher housing is located on the school campus. A duplex and single home were newly built in the summer of 2006. Some teachers also rent from the community, but some of these homes are about a mile away from the school.

There are two stores in the community. The post office is near the school. The airport is two miles away, so keeping in close contact with the airline agent is vital prior to travel.
Ella B. Vernetti School - Koyukuk

The Ella B. Vernetti School is located in Koyukuk, where the Koyukuk River meets the Yukon River. Koyukuk is 290 air miles west of Fairbanks. The community is predominantly Koyukon Athabascan.

There are two classrooms: grades K-4, 5-10. The Principal has a full teaching load. There is also additional space upstairs for more classrooms. The Teacher and Teacher Aides have been there for several years. The Special Education Teacher serving Koyukuk & Huslia, is based here. Students go home for lunch.

There is one teacher housing unit, recently upgraded. There is one store. The post office and airport are fairly close.
Andrew K. Demoski School - Nulato

The Andrew K. Demoski School is located in Nulato, which is on the Yukon River. Nulato is 310 air miles west of Fairbanks. Nulato is predominantly Lower Koyukon Athabascan. There are two townsites, the old (downtown) and the new (up on the hill). The majority of the population live in the new townsite.

There are seven classrooms: grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 (two). The Principal also teaches. Most of the K-8 teachers have been there for numerous years. There are teacher aides who have been with the school for numerous years. Students eat lunch at school.

The teacher housing is located right next to the school. A duplex was built in the summer of 2006. The rest of the housing has gone through renovations. The post office and the two stores are located in the new townsite, which is two miles away. The airport is one mile away. There is school bus service.
Kaltag School—Kaltag

The Kaltag School is located in Kaltag, 335 air miles west of Fairbanks, on the Yukon River. It is located at least 40 miles below Nulato. Kaltag is predominantly Lower Koyukon Athabascan. The school is located fairly close to the store, post office, and the airport.

There are three classrooms: grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. The Principal teaches some of the courses. There are Teacher Aides who have been there numerous years. The school was renovated in 2004-05. Students go home for lunch. There is a new housing duplex just built in 2008. The rest of the housing was renovated in 2002.
Merrel A. Kangas School—Ruby

The Merrel A. Kangas School is located in Ruby, 230 air miles west of Fairbanks. Ruby is on the Yukon River. The community is predominantly Koyukon Athabascan.

There are four classrooms: grades K-2, 3-6, 7-8, and 9-12. Most of the teaching staff have been there for numerous years. Teacher Aides assist in the classrooms and have also been there numerous years. The Principal teaches a couple of the courses and shares a classroom with another teacher. Ruby maintains a hot lunch program.

A new teacher housing duplex was built in 2010 and is located on school grounds. There is also an older unit about a half mile from the school. The post office and the stores are located down the hill, about a mile away. The airport is approximately a half mile away from the school.
Minto School—Minto

The Minto School is located in Minto, which is on the Tolovana River, and is 11 miles off of the Elliot Highway (3 hours west of Fairbanks). Minto is on the road system. The community is predominantly Lower Tanana Athabascan.

There are six classrooms: grades K-1, 2-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12 (two). The Principal teaches some courses. The elementary teachers have been there numerous years and the secondary teachers for 2-5 years. The Teacher Aides have been there for numerous years. Students walk to the Minto Lodge for lunch.

A new teacher housing duplex was built in 2008. There is also an older duplex located on site. Most of the teachers have automobiles, which provide easy access to the stores, post office, and community hall.
Gladys Dart School—Manley Hot Springs

The Manley Hot Springs Gladys Dart School is located on the Tanana River and at the end of the Elliot Highway (4 hours from Fairbanks). The community is predominantly Caucasian.

There are two classrooms: grades K-4 and 5-12. The Teacher and Teacher Aides have been there numerous years. The Principal has a full teaching load. Students eat bag lunches at school.

A new teacher housing unit built in 2009 is located right next to the school. Most of the community members own automobiles, so access to the local services is fairly easy.
Housing

The district provides teacher housing. The rent ranges between $500-$550 per month. There is a $500 security deposit, that is refundable when you leave the district. There is a fee for having a pet also. The new housing does not allow any pets. The housing is standard & basic; conditions and types of housing units vary from village to village.

A system has been set up to register any teacher concerns regarding housing. This will be explained to you in a new teacher orientation session.

In general, you will be responsible for paying rent (you will enter into a rental agreement with the District). The District pays electricity, fuel oil and water. If you have a propane stove, the district will allow you one free bottle for your unit. Telephone costs are paid by the teacher. These costs vary from site to site. Your rent will be paid
through an automatic payroll deduction each month. Your security deposit will be paid in 3-4 installments.

You should plan on minimal storage space, small kitchen, small living room and small bedroom(s). Most units are 900 square feet or less. All district-owned units have hot and cold running water, bathtub or shower, toilet and easy access to a washer and dryer for clothes. They also have stoves and refrigerators. Furniture is provided in each unit. All of the newer housing units also have newer furniture.

If you need a television set or a microwave, you will need to bring those with you, as they are not provided by the district. Toasters, toaster ovens and other small appliances (e.g., blenders, irons) are also not provided.

Teacher housing living room in Huslia
The Athabascan People

The indigenous people in Alaska are the Athabascans (northern interior region), Eskimos (western and northern coastal regions), Aleuts (Aleutian Islands, south central), Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian (south east). Each of these groups has different dialects and each has different language structure. The Athabascans refer to themselves as Denaa, which means “The People.”

The Athabascans have eleven linguistic groups. The two most common in our district are the Koyukon and the Tanana (Minto Area). Both are extremely complex and difficult to learn. There are very few Native speakers of these languages left and efforts are being made by the University of Alaska, Alaska Native Language Center and the Interior Athabascan Tribal College to revive and preserve the Native languages throughout Alaska. In December of 2000, the first Koyukon Athabascan Dictionary was published after decades of work. Each school library has a copy.

Traditionally, the Interior Athabascans were nomadic, traveling in groups of 20 – 40 to hunt, trap and fish. The groups traveled through the resource areas in the Interior. In summer, they established fish camps and in winter, they established villages. Some Athabascan families still have their ancestral fish camps and travel to the family fish camp in the summer. This is an important traditional activity.

The elders in each village are highly regarded and respected. Children are taught at a young age to respect their elders. Including elders in school functions and as special guests is rewarding for the elders, students, and the teaching staff.
Today, most of the Athabascans in our region follow a mixture of their traditional subsistence lifestyle and westernized lifestyles. Hunting and fishing are extremely important to them, for this is the way in which they secure enough meat for the winter for themselves and for their dog teams. Student absenteeism during the hunting season does impact the school sites. Students are encouraged to keep journals, prepare reports on their hunting trips, and document any traditional stories or activities they observed.

Athabascan Values

Many Native organizations are working to revive and maintain lost Athabascan culture. The following set of values has been published through a joint effort of the Fairbanks Native Association, the Tanana Chiefs Conference and the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Every Athabascan is responsible to all other Athabascans for the survival of our Cultural Spirit, and the values and traditions through which it survives. Through our extended family, we retain, teach and live our Athabascan way.

With guidance and support from Elders, we must teach our children Athabascan Values:

- Knowledge of Language
- Sharing Respect for Others
- Cooperation
- Respect for Elders
- Love for Children
- Hard Work
- Knowledge of Family Tree
- Avoid Conflict
Respect for Nature
Spirituality
Humor
Family Roles
Hunter Success
Domestic Skills
Humility
Responsibility to Tribe

Our understanding of our Universe and our place in it is a belief in our Creator and a respect for all His Creations.

Greeting phrases in Lower Tanana:
Do’eent’a?  How are you?
Eszroonh.  I’m fine
Baasee’  Thank you.

Sample introduction:
Se'oozra'__________.  My name is ________.
Te’a ______ be'oozra'.  My dad's name is ____.
En’a' ______ be'ooze'.  My dad's name is ____.
____ dhesdo.  I live in ____________.

Greeting phrases in Koyukon:
Do’eent’aa?  How are you?
Eszoonh or do’eelstaa’aa.  I’m fine
Baasee’, Maasee’ (L) Thank you.

Sample introduction:
__________se'ooze'. My name is ________.
Eetaa'e _____ be'ooze'. My dad's name is ____.
Enaa'e _____ be'ooze'. My dad’s name is ____.
_____ lesdo. I live in ______________.
Transportation

With the exception of Manley Hot Springs and Minto, all YKSD villages are remote and reachable only by air. You will be traveling in small planes, most of which seat between six and ten people depending upon the individual aircraft. There is a new aircraft with 19 seats that flies to some of the larger villages.

Airfare ticket prices are high for all bush airlines. Round trip fares range from $260 (Ruby) to $402 (Kaltag) per person (these are 2011 prices and subject to change). Most flights limit the amount of baggage you can carry. Excess baggage costs vary from site to site. Wright Air Service allows 40 pounds per person. ERA & Warbelow’s allows you 40 pounds for Ruby & 80 pounds to the other sites. ERA allows 80 pounds. For extra weight, you will have to pay freight charges, which average around .80
cents per pound (Warbelow’s & Wrights-to Allakaket) or $2.14 (ERA) to Nulato & Kaltag. Warbelow’s is usually the cheapest. The main airlines for our school sites are Warbelows, ERA, and Wrights.

In general, “carryon” luggage is not allowed. All luggage and bags are to be checked. Packing in tubs or boxes is preferable to packing good suitcases. If you have packed fresh fruit or vegetables, be sure to ask to have the boxes put in the cabin and not in the wing lockers because your produce will freeze in the wing lockers. Make sure you put "perishable" or "freeze" stickers on your boxes when needed.

Flying in a small plane for the first time is an experience! You might want to ask for a pair of earplugs (available at the ticket counters) because the engine noise can be damaging to your ears.

At some point, you will be asked for your weight so that the weight in the plane can be evenly distributed. Take into account any winter gear you may have on as part of your weight estimate. Some of the seat belts in the small planes are designed for very small people, so you may have to ask for a seat belt extension. Don’t be embarrassed to ask.

Even in the spring and summer, the planes can be very cold, so dress in layers and wear warm socks and boots.

Turbulence in the small aircraft used for bush flights can be extreme. Many flights travel directly over the Yukon River, which creates an updraft/turbulence. Travel over mountains (going north) can also be turbulent. If you are prone to airsickness (or even if you’re not) you need to be prepared. Some of the planes have airsickness bags and some do not, so tuck something appropriate in your pocket. There are no bathroom facilities on these planes, so go before you board. Plan on your flight being at least 2 hours air time, with 1-3 stops along the way.
Each village has its own airstrip with no control towers or guidance systems for the airstrips. For the most part, these are gravel runways that vary in length and width. In the winter, the airstrips are plowed to clear the snow.

Most of the flight services do not fly when temperatures are below –40° Fahrenheit. The district does not allow its employees or students to travel on district trips or business at –40° or colder.

The Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers also create a lot of moisture in the air, and villages can get “socked in” for days at a time. This prevents landing. The pilots will not land unless they have enough clearance under the cloud cover to see the airstrip (usually at least 1 mile).

Fog and weather conditions up and down both rivers can change in a matter of minutes. For instance, you might take off from Fairbanks to Nulato and be told it’s clear in Nulato to find that an hour later, Nulato is “socked in” and you have to return to Fairbanks.
When you plan to travel, be flexible. Do not be surprised if your flight doesn’t leave at your scheduled time or even on your scheduled day. The unpredictable weather causes delays and changes. Plan ahead, especially at vacation time. There may be times where you might have to cut personal leave short just to get back to your site a day or two earlier than your previously set travel date.

At −50°, parental discretion is advised in determining student attendance at school. The school district does not close schools for cold weather. In rare situations, the Superintendent may close schools for safety reasons, due to a combination of cold weather, road conditions, or ice fog. Any missed days will most likely have to be made up later in the school year.

You will be met at the airstrip by a truck, van or 4-wheeler in the summer. In winter, you may be met by a driver on a snowmachine/snowmobile. In all probability, you will find yourself riding to your school destination in the bed of a pickup truck, sitting on top of all kinds of boxes and baggage, or in a sled being pulled by a snow machine. The people who meet you are agents for the various flight service companies or school employees.

Meeting the plane in Hughes
Some teachers who stay in the district eventually purchase a snow machine or a four-wheeler for winter travel and summer off road travel in the bush. Be prepared for high gasoline costs ($5.00 per gallon and up). You will also need to be prepared to perform your own maintenance on your machine.

For winter exercise and fun, you can also try snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Many teachers and their families also take up dog sledding.
Children and Pets

If you have children or pets, you will need to make some special preparations. First, of course, you must prepare your children and/or animal to fly. From there on, planning for any contingency is the most important thing you can do.

If you have very young children still in diapers and eating prepared baby food, you will need to stock up on these items before you go to your site. Baby food and diapers are scarce in village stores and also very expensive.

Day care availability varies with the village. Some have Head Start programs and others have pre-school programs, but do not meet everyday. In general, there are no childcare facilities for your little ones and babysitters are also rare.

If you bring a pet to the village, be prepared to have the pet ride in a kennel on the airplane. Plan on having your pet vaccinated before you leave Fairbanks, because there are no animal clinics in the villages. People rarely, if ever, bring cats to the villages. Cats would have to be strictly indoor animals. Some teachers have brought fish, parrots or other birds with them.

Pet food can also be expensive in village general stores. It’s best to stock up on pet food before you go. Both Fred Meyer and Sam’s Club in Fairbanks stock large bags of dog food and will ship to bush communities.

There are no fenced areas with the teacher housing units. You must keep dogs secured on chains. Loose dogs are in danger from other animals (foxes, wolves).

Interior Alaska can present some of the harshest weather on the planet. Summer temperatures can reach into the 90°’s and winter temperatures extend sometimes to -60° or -70° degrees Fahrenheit. On average the temperature
ranges between 10° above to 20° below. Wind chill can drive temperatures down to 100 degrees below zero.

Common sense tells us that clothing (especially in winter) is related intimately to survival. Uncovered ears and ungloved hands can develop frostbite in a matter of minutes when temperatures dip below zero.

You need to supply yourself with arctic winter gear before the snow flies (usually by the middle of October). You can order your gear from catalogs such as Cabela’s or you can purchase what you need at the following Fairbanks stores:

- The Prospector Outfitters on South Cushman
- Big Ray’s on 2nd Avenue downtown
- Sportsman’s Warehouse on Johansen Expressway
- Beaver Sports on College Road
All of these stores have knowledgeable salespeople who can assist you and answer your questions.

Your basic winter gear should include a winter jacket or parka that is at least mid-thigh length. It should be well-insulated with down or other material. The outer shell needs to be wind and waterproof. Do not skimp on price on your parka or any of your other gear. For very cold weather, insulated or lined bib overalls are a good idea. By the time all is said and done, your gear could cost you around $400.

Protect your feet in high quality boots. Arctic boots come in a lot of variations; none are stylish. You will find that boots have temperature ratings. Some of those ratings can go down to –100 degrees (very heavy clunky boots). You’ll have to be your own judge on what kind of boots you want. Be sure to ask about how the soles of your boots will perform in very cold weather (some types of rubber get extremely stiff and dangerous at low temperatures). Hand coverings are a necessity. Some people prefer mitts (down-insulated ski mittens); others prefer insulated gloves. You’ll find out quite quickly if your mitts or gloves are going to keep your hands warm.
Always protect your ears and head. You can lose 20 percent of your body heat through an uncovered head. Nothing will keep your head as warm as fur. You might be able to purchase a trapper’s hat in your village from a local craftsperson. You might also want to add a fur ruff to your jacket. Alaska Natives have traditional beliefs about what types of fur men and women can wear. Check before you commit. Knitted or fleece caps are fine for warmer temperatures (above zero).

Mufflers and scarves are also necessary to have. They can shield your nose and mouth when you’re breathing very cold air. You can also purchase facemasks or ski masks.

At school, dress casual yet professional. These are not schools in which you want to wear three-piece suits. You also don’t want to dress in your jeans.

Your students will probably be in some variation of blue jeans and t-shirts (either short or long-sleeved) and hooded sweaters. You may notice that many of your students wear the same clothes often. Some of their families cannot afford to buy a lot of clothes. Be sensitive to this and not present yourself as a fashion plate.

Most teachers wear slacks and sweaters or long-sleeved shirts. Some of the women occasionally wear dresses or
skirts. Neckties are rare on the men, as are sport coats. There are no dry cleaning facilities in the villages.

When break-up comes, be prepared for very sloppy muddy roads. A pair of knee-high rubber boots will stand you in good stead. Break up (when the ice & snow melts) usually happens in late April or early May. There are no paved streets in our villages; the dirt roads through the villages can get pretty slick, depending upon the clay content of the dirt.

Shopping and Shipping

Provisioning yourself for your sojourn to the Bush can be a challenging experience. Gone are the days when you can jump in your car and go to the nearest Safeway for a snack.

Most villagers have staples, canned goods and other non-perishables brought in on a summer barge. They supplement this with purchases made on occasional trips to “town.”

Sam’s Club, Walmart, and Fred Meyer in Fairbanks also accept “Bush Orders.” You can order what you want and they will pack it and ship it to you. Fred Meyer charges 10% for pre-paid, 25% on COD, with the first hundred dollars at a set rate. Sam’s charge 25% of your order. Walmart charges 10% handling plus postage.

Fresh fruit and other produce are rare and expensive treats that arrive infrequently at village general stores. Some village residents have joking that the lettuce is “sold out” before the plane lands.
If you drink milk, you’ll probably want to purchase boxes of sterilized shelf milk, named “RealFresh”. Sam’s Club carries it. It stays fresh unopened for up to a year. After opening, of course, it must be refrigerated.

Canned goods, pasta and other non-perishables will make up most of your diet. Most village residents bring coolers to town when they come so they can take back perishable items like meat, chicken or produce.

Hunters and fisherman need the appropriate licenses to take advantage of Alaska’s wild game. Game regulations vary with each game management district, so if this is a priority for you, check with the Department of Fish & Game in Fairbanks before you go to your site.

Every village has at least one general store and will stock everything from soda pop to post cards. Although the general stores can be pricey, villagers and store proprietors may appreciate when teachers do some business with them.

For shipping household goods, books and other personal items, your best bet is the U.S. Postal Service. Rates are cheaper than those for the airlines. Postal service mail to rural Alaska may take longer than air shipping because it has to wait until a plane has room for it. You should
check prices for both air shipping and postal freight before you ship. It’s about $15.00 to ship a 40 lb. box from Fairbanks to any “997” zip code.

Medical and Dental

Dentists and hygienists travel to the villages to do examinations and cleaning for Native children and adults. The nearest dentists available to you are in Fairbanks. Most of them have heavily booked schedules, so if you need regular care, you need to plan ahead (sometimes four months in advance).

If you have chronic health problems or prescription drug needs, it is best to take a large supply of your medications with you. This will prevent problems having prescriptions refilled if you run out and the planes can’t fly. Be sure to talk to your physician about your impending adventure. He or she may have good advice for you about how to avoid problems.

Talk to your physician about preventive measures for yourself. Flu vaccine has been scarce in Alaska during the
past few years, so, again, discuss the flu vaccine issue with your doctor. Because bush Alaska is so remote, it is important to be caught up on your immunizations. Making a drastic life change such as the one you are about to experience can add stress to your life and lower your resistance. Above all, you must take care of your own health and that of your family.

Some YKSD Staff and PEAK Trainers leaving Huslia on a beautiful fall day
Winter, SAD and Cabin Fever

Your mental/ emotional health is extremely important for the maintenance of your overall well-being. Because you are going to be living at extreme northern latitudes, you may be at risk for developing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a type of depression that generally follows the seasons.

The most common form of SAD is related to light-deprivation in the winter. It is a physiological response to lack of sunlight. Between 4 and 6 of every 100 people may suffer from a severe form of SAD and another 10 to 20 may suffer from mild SAD. It is much more common in women than in men and generally does not manifest itself in people under the age of 20.

From early November through mid-February, the days in Interior Alaska seem to be long, cold, and dark. Contrary to popular opinion, it is never dark for 24 hours a day in the Interior. In the depths of December, the sun rises at about 11:00 a.m. and sets at 1:00 p.m., but there are from two to three hours of “twilight” on either side of dawn and nightfall.

Nonetheless, Alaskans in general are light-deprived and may suffer from SAD more than people in the Lower ‘48. The treatment differs for each person. Some people purchase or build “light boxes” using broad-spectrum lamps. Others rely upon prescription antidepressants and some rely upon behavior modification. Many people use a combination of these three popular therapies depending upon recommendations from their physicians.

You can do a lot to alleviate the symptoms of SAD by being pro-active before any symptoms appear. Pay attention to your diet and exercise choices. The last thing a depressed person wants to do is exercise, but it may be
about the best thing he or she can do to improve mood. Aerobic exercise (brisk walking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing—all available to you in the village) boosts mood levels significantly.

“Cabin fever” (not a physical fever) is a reality wherever you live. It comes from being cooped up in a confined area with “nothing to do.” Kids get cabin fever in classrooms (so do teachers); adults get cabin fever at home. It’s related to boredom and a natural human need for variety.
Practical Issues

Banking

Your paychecks can be automatically deposited to any banking account you wish. Some teachers set up accounts with banks or credit unions in Fairbanks and or other statewide banks, for easy access. There are no Automatic Teller Machines in the villages and credit cards are not accepted in village stores. You will need to keep some cash on hand for village transactions.

If you choose to set up an account in Fairbanks, you should do so before you travel to your site. The following website has a list of the addresses and phone numbers for the major banking institutions in Fairbanks. www.explorefairbanks.com

YKSD Board of Education, meets in the Merreline A. Kangas gym in Ruby
Annual Leave

This section is intended to summarize leave policies. For specifics, you should refer to the Negotiated Agreement.

Sick Leave

You are allowed twelve sick leave days per school year. These accrue at the rate of 1 1/3 days per month over the nine months of the year and carry over from one year to the next.

If you are sick, you will need to call your principal and have him or her arrange for a substitute teacher for you. Substitute teachers are difficult to find in the villages, although some sites have quite a number of substitutes.

Your lesson plans should be available for your substitute and they should be easy to follow. Any needed materials should also be available for your substitute.

Sick leave may be taken when you yourself are ill, when one of your children is ill or when your spouse is seriously ill. You are also allowed sick or bereavement leave when a parent or other immediate family member becomes critically ill or passes away. For extended leave, you may be asked to submit a letter from your doctor. Contact HR if this happens to be the case.

Once you have used up your twelve sick days, you are put on leave without pay status, unless you have opted to enroll in the district-wide sick leave bank. The district requires that you fill out a leave slip for any kind of leave. These are signed by your principal and turned in to the payroll department.

Personal Leave

Teachers are allowed three days of personal leave per year. Personal leave may not be taken on the days be-
fore or after winter vacations. It may also not be taken during the first or last weeks of school.

As with sick leave, you must fill out a leave slip; requests for personal leave should be made no later than 24 hours in advance of the anticipated leave date. All leave slips are to be reconciled at the end of the school year with a contract summation. All district employees complete these summations MONTHLY. You will complete yours and turn it in to your site administrator. Contract summations must be submitted through your site administrator to HR each month.

Weather and Travel

When you return from vacations, you may get stranded in Fairbanks because of weather. It is best to plan your leave so that you give yourself a couple days to get back to your site, if at all possible because school is still in operation, even in cold weather. If you are stranded on normal working days, you are expected to report to your supervisor.

If you are stranded and fail to report to your supervisor, you will be put on leave without pay. The district is not responsible for hotel, per diem or transportation costs you might incur while stranded.
Village Life

Living in an Alaskan village will be a challenge for you. This booklet is an attempt to tell you the unvarnished truth about the hardships of living in a village. To be sure, there are joys to balance the hardships. It is your obligation to look for those joys.

For the first time in your life, you may be part of a "minority" culture. If you are non-native, you may not feel as though you belong at first and might feel the need to "prove" yourself. The proof of self will come through your dedication to your position as a teacher and through your ability to become a member of a very isolated community.

Overwhelmingly, the parents and community members stated they wanted teachers to “participate more in community activities.” Teachers likewise would like to see parents participate more in school activities.

Becoming involved in village life is difficult for most “outsiders.” Dances and celebrations held at the community hall will involve many differing types of celebrations/
events, so you might want to use some discretion as to which event you attend. However, the most important bit of advice is to be active in your new community.

Health officials throughout the state of Alaska recognize that the alcoholism rates for Alaska Natives are among the highest in the nation. Native elders repeatedly make requests for the drinking to stop. Native corporations have launched enormous campaigns to counteract the problems that result from alcohol consumption.

The alcohol problems have been created by a complex social element that cannot easily be addressed or summarized. An economic base in the villages is almost nonexistent. There are no industries, no services and no business enterprises with the exception of the village stores. For the most part, the schools provide about 40 percent of the employment in bush villages.

Your most difficult challenge may be to accept each individual you meet with unconditional positive regard. You may see public displays of alcohol abuse and other troubling behaviors. None of these are part of the Athabascan heritage. They are part of the current culture, which has evolved out of nearly a century of cultural upheavals and confusion.

Despite everything, you will find people in each village who care deeply about the school and the welfare of the children who attend.
Where can I get the winter clothing I need?

In Fairbanks, Big Ray’s The Prospector, Sportsman’s Warehouse and Beaver Sports carry a full line of winter gear for men, women and children. Cabela’s is also a good online source.

Are the mosquitoes as bad as everyone says they are?

In the fall, little black flies and gnats are very common. You will need to take mosquito repellent with you and be prepare to re-apply it frequently if you spend a lot of time outside.

What kinds of animals can I expect to see?

Bears are very common, especially in the fall when they are gorging on berries before they hibernate. (Please note: some villages have a taboo against women even speaking the word “bear.” Make discreet inquiries before talking about bears). You will more likely see moose, beaver and many migratory waterfowl. Wolf sightings are rare, as are caribou. Last year a young gray whale found its way up the Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers in early fall. It is a good idea to take a gunner along with you if you decide to go out hiking in the fall.

What about phone service?

Each village has its own phone service provider. You will need to make arrangements when you get there to have your service set up. Phone cards for long distance calling work from the villages. Cell phone service is available in Ruby and will be available in Nulato soon.
Some Advice to New Teachers from Teachers with Longevity in the Villages:

"Accept what you see without judging."

"Participate as much as you can in the life of the village."

"Find out what the traditions and taboos are for your village are and respect them."

"Learn to be as flexible as possible."

"Develop a hobby or other avocation to keep yourself busy during the winter months."

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there churches in the villages?

Yes. Every village has at least one church. Most of them are Catholic or Episcopal, although there are some Baptist congregations. Teachers are always welcome.

How soon do I need to get winter clothing?

Serious snow usually doesn’t set in until late October. However, this is not a hard and fast prediction. If you like to live on the edge, order late. You’ll have frost by the middle of September, so you’ll at least need hats and gloves.
How do I go about ordering food and other supplies?

Fred Meyer and Sam’s Club both have Bush Order departments. Each store is different, so you will have to check with the store. You purchase what you want in the store and take it to the bush order department or order by phone or fax. They will box and ship your food and other supplies for you for about 10-25 percent of your total order’s costs. Otherwise, you will have to depend upon the general store in the village and your infrequent visits to town.

Can I purchase gasoline in the village?

Each village has a fuel depot where gasoline for vehicles can be purchased. All have different hours of operation, so check when you get there.

What about my personal vehicle?

Many teachers and site administrators leave their personal vehicles at the district office while they are out at their sites. Provide the business office with a set of keys to your vehicle so it can be moved if necessary. The district office is not normally open after 5:00 p.m. or on weekends, so you will need to make arrangements to get in the gate to retrieve your vehicle when you come to town.

Can I get hunting and fishing licenses in the village?

Yes. Usually they can be purchased at the city or village council office. Check when you get to your village.

If I need to see a doctor or my dentist what do I do?

Call and make your medical and dental appointments months ahead of time. You can have sick leave to come to town for medical appointments. Many teachers sched-
ule their non-emergency medical appointments on the same day to save time. If you have an emergency, you will be charged sick leave.

**What if I have a real medical emergency?**

Real medical emergencies are rare, but they do pose problems. Seriously injured or ill people must be evacuated by plane to Fairbanks. You would have to call an air ambulance service (extremely expensive) to get out of the village. Air ambulance services operate 24 hours a day and can fly to the villages unless the weather is bad. Once in Fairbanks, you would be taken to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital (FMH). FMH is an excellent medical facility with well-trained trauma specialists. Cardiac emergencies are usually stabilized in Fairbanks and flown to Anchorage for evaluation and treatment.

**What kind of law enforcement is in the villages?**

A few villages have a Village Public Safety Officer; many do not. These officers are trained by the Alaska State Troopers as part of a program to serve rural communities. Most of these public safety officers do not stay in the villages for long. The nearest office for State Troopers is in Galena or Fairbanks. Troopers fly to villages in cases of emergencies.

**I’m from out of state. What if I have a family emergency and have to get home?**

Alaska Airlines has a good reputation for helping people get home in family emergencies. Once you get out of the village, they will do what they can to get you to your destination as quickly as possible.
I’ve heard that students in village schools in Alaska are “at risk”. Is that true? Our schools have very few reported incidences of fighting on school property, no reported incidences of weapons being brought to school and low suspension rates. Student discipline problems vary by school. Students are at risk for drug and alcohol abuse, as are urban area students.

_YKSD students participating in "Phlight Club", building youth leadership, empowerment, and connections._

_Advice from Native Educator Associations:_

“Keep all your moving receipts - post office mailings, plane tickets, etc. The move to your new job might be tax deductible.”
## Phone Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Office</td>
<td>907-374-9400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks Urgent Care Clinic</td>
<td>907-452-2178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanana Valley Clinic</td>
<td>907-459-3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks Clinic</td>
<td>907-452-1761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warbelows AirCare Ambulance</td>
<td>1-800-491-1247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Elementary students in Huslia classroom
References and Additional Reading

Here is a short list of books and other materials that you might find interesting. The list is by no means complete. These titles will get you started. Most of these are available in your school’s library.

Internet Sources:

Alaska Native Knowledge Network; part of the University of Alaska and located in Fairbanks. This group works with Native schools and educators throughout Alaska on projects directed toward improving education in village schools. It also develops curriculum, sponsors Native Literature conferences and performs many other services. Their newsletter is a great source of information as well.

Web Address: http://www.ankn.uaf.edu

Links to useful sites:

http://pages.mhlearningnetwork.com/ketsoo/

http://www.googleearth.com (search by village name)

http://www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_CIS.htm (search by village name for community profile)

Books:


Tales of the Dena by Frederica de Laguna. This is a book of myths from the Tanana, Koyukuk and Yukon River regions of Interior Alaska. It not only has information about each narrator, it also provides historical information, particularly about the Kaltag, Koyukuk, Ruby and Nulato regions.
Shadows on the Koyukuk by Sidney Huntington. This is a great combination of personal, family and historical lore from one of Interior Alaska’s most notable families.

Two Old Women and Bird Girl and the Man Who Followed the Sun by Velma Wallace. Wallace is an Upper Tanana Athabascan who has taken traditional folktales and rewritten them. Two Old Women is an excellently written tale about two women who were ostracized from their tribe because they could not contribute anymore. Bird Girl is an interweaving of two separate stories into one. It tells of two rebellious headstrong children who go their own way and pay the consequences.

Elder Biographies: this is a series of biographies done by elders in each village. They tell village history as well as the elder’s own story. Look for these in your school library.

The following list is from Ray Barnhardt at UAF, School of Education and Bob Maguire at Assoc. of Interior Native Educators.

Napoleon - Yuuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being
Kawagley - A Yupiaq World View
Wilson—Gwitch’in Native Elders: Not Just Knowledge, But a Way of Looking . . .
Barnhardt/Tonsmeire - Lessons Taught/Lessons Learned, Vol. I
Stephens —Handbook for Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum
ANKN – Cultural Standards and Guidelines booklets
AKRSI/CHEI – “Old Minto Cultural Camp” (video)
AKRSI – “To Show What We Know” (video)
Madison - “Hitting Sticks, Healing Hearts” (video)
Madison - "Songs of Minto Life" (video)
Kawagley/Barnhardt, R.—"Education Indigenous to Place"
Barnhardt, C. - "Tuning-In: Athabaskan Teachers and Athabaskan Students"
Barnhardt, R.—"Teaching/Learning Across Cultures: Strategies for Success"
Merculieff - "Western Society’s Linear Systems and Aboriginal Cultures"
WIPCE - "Coolingata Statement on Indigenous Peoples Education Rights"
Ongtooguk - "Their Silence About Us: The Absence of Alaska Natives in Curr,
Barnhardt, R. - "Two Cultures, One School: St. Mary’s, Alaska"
Alaska Natives Commission - "Alaska Native Education: Final Report"
Nelson - "The Athabaskans: People of the Boreal Forest"
Barnhardt, R., et al - "Small High School Programs for Rural Alaska"
Grubis and Oomittuk - "A Point Hope Partnership With the Inupiat Elders of Tikigaq"
Baffin Divisional Board of Education - "Piniagtavut Integrated Program"
NWT - "Dene Kede Curriculum: Teacher’s Resource Manual"
NWT - "Inuugatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective"
Gem of the Yukon - History of Ruby (book)
School Board Goals

♦ Raise Student Achievement
♦ Retain & Recruit Quality Educators
♦ Build Capacity with Native Language Program
♦ Align Budget to District Initiatives
♦ Develop Career Technical Programs
♦ Increase Communication

YKSD Mission Statement
The mission of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District, in active partnership with its families and communities, is to provide our students with the skills and knowledge necessary to become contributing members of their families, communities and society.

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