



Culture of Generosity

Subsistence cultures rely on bigger picture of community

BY DAVID RURIK

Imagine yourself meandering your way up and down a remote river with your father engaging in an essential piece of your heritage, finding food for your family and community. Soft wind blows, sun glints down, and the hunt is on. For young men like Nathan, this is exactly where he found himself in the middle of September. Native culture values both the subsistence lifestyle and the community orientation that is essential in a rural environment. A visible piece of this orientation is the tradition in which young hunters share the meat from their first catch with their village elders.

For Nathan, his first successful harvest of moose didn't come back to his family's freezer, but rather was shared with his grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other elders in the village where the hunt took place. This story represents a vital part of the way in which the Native peoples of Alaska have flourished for many generations and can serve as a valuable lesson for people of all walks of life in how to create a flourishing community. At Covenant Youth of Alaska ongoing conversations reflect our desire to see Alaska's youth in communities where they can flourish.

One of the key aspects to this flourishing is the bringing together

of cultural values with the identity that is presented in Christ. I often think of the last chapter in the book of John when contemplating about how Jesus was careful to generously give when much was being asked of him. His disciples had returned to their previous employment of fishing and he came to meet them there. What strikes me about the following interchange is not that he provides fish for the disciples to catch, rather it is that he himself has fish to share. He is taking a part in their system or way of doing things.

In Alaska, the way of doing things is to share with one another. A young hunter's first success is given away. When it comes to picking berries from the tundra, the bounty is a shared among family.

When it comes to ministry, there is a sense of sharing in the call together. When CYAK works with the network of churches across Alaska, a sense of this togetherness comes to the forefront. The phrase 'it takes a village' comes to mind as the labor of working in communities together for the sake of gospel comes into focus. The harvest is ripe in Alaska and some of the weeds among the harvest are aggressive. It takes your input to facilitate the gospel's continued growth in Alaska. Just as it was for Paul in the early church, the work of

the gospel relies on the broader body of Christ. Financial resources are a challenge for our Alaska churches and the impact that CYAK's partners make is immeasurable.

Just as Christ was ready to share his fish with fishermen so it is for each of us; we must share our harvest so that His kingdom can advance. As CYAK continues to make an impact on young people in Alaska there is tangible evidence that the work of the local church creates healthy and vibrant communities. Native culture places high value on sharing a young hunter's first successful harvest as a way of honoring and engaging with family and community. Gleaning knowledge from this way of living will invite the body of Christ into deeper communion with each other as we share generously.

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