

AGSD Newsletter: Fall Semester 2019

A-CHILL started fast out of the chute in Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD) with an early semester field trip opportunity at a fish camp owned by A-CHILL Itinerant teacher, Mari Hoe-Raitto. A-CHILL students from Eagle, Northway, and Tetlin with teacher chaperones from Northway and Tok along with Yukon-Koyukuk School District students and chaperones from Rampart, Nulato and Huslia participated in a first **YUKON RIVER SCIENCE & CULTURE CAMP**. There were up to eight guest instructors at each 4-day camp including; University of Alaska-Fairbanks and out-of-state scientists teaching biochemistry and botany; a veterinarian teaching anatomy and sled dog health; a carpenter teaching building skills; a photojournalist teaching photography; and two culture teachers teaching traditional fish camp skills such as catching, cutting, smoking in a smokehouse, and preserving fish. Students learned about culture through art activities such as beading and story telling. There were up to 10 dogs of different breeds at each camp including a sled dog mother with puppies. The camp gave youth the opportunity to live at a fish camp with science and culture as part of every day.



Three A-CHILL classes are taught in 5 AGSD Schools involving students at all grade levels. Schoolteachers work with A-CHILL Mushing Coordinator, Roni Noonan-Agree, who teaches classes at her kennel in Tanacross or brings dogs into the classroom. She also schedules two other local dog musher teachers, Rob Fabian and Cammy Robinson, to teach at their kennels or bring dogs to another location. Roni works closely with Mari Hoe-Raitto, who travels with her dogs to teach hands-on activities. Both also support teachers teaching classroom curriculum including ways to best incorporate In-Kennel class lessons and other sled dog related science and culture activities.

AGSD SCHOOLS participating in A-CHILL:

Tanacross elementary and middle school students started the semester with great enthusiastic to learn all that the *Alaska Culture-Dog Mushing* class and the *A-CHILL After-school Program* offer. Students experience In-Kennel classes with Roni to learn about dog nutrition, puppy socialization, de-worming, nail trimming and also dog yard maintenance. On a field trip to Fairbanks, students viewed a screening of the ATTLA documentary featuring the life and work of the late George Atlla. They visited the Morris Thompson Culture Center and the Dog Mushing Museum. They stopped at Mari's kennel in Salcha for dog care lessons, and for sled dog activities and games. Other hands-on learning was available at a Tok dog musher teacher's farm where students learned the basic care of horses, goats, geese and pigs. Students milked a goat, gathered eggs, and observed hoof and horn trimming. Working together, Roni and Mari taught students dog obedience training methods and how to read a dog. On visits to AGSD, Mari taught students how to sew neck and wrist warmers, dress in the cold, and ski. Students also participated in multi-school kennel gatherings to learn about harnessing dogs, equipment, and running dogs.



Mentasta elementary, middle and high school students enrolled in *Alaska Culture- Dog Mushing class* thrived from instruction by Roni, who traveled with her dogs to teach in the classroom. She brought six puppies from her kennel so students could assist giving vaccinations and de-wormer. She explained dog behavior and the importance of puppy socialization; all students loved handling and caring for the puppies. Students learned about dog trail access and maintenance, and researched the historic Eagle Trail. Mari traveled to Mentasta School with Roni to teach students how to make gang-lines and skijor lines. Students also made their own neck and wrist warmers, and learned how to keep their body core, face, feet and hands warm along with the necessity of good winter gear. Students traveled to the Tok dog musher teacher's farm to learn animal husbandry for horses, goats, chickens, ducks, and pigs. They met the sled dogs and learned about their care. Students also participated in multi-school gatherings to learn to harness dogs, the equipment used to run dogs, and also about safety. During the last class of the semester, students practiced sking, ran dogs, and learned biathlon skills from a traveling instructor!



Eagle school principal/teacher with the help of her small dog team, started an *A-CHILL After-school Program* with an excited group of elementary school students eager to learn about sled dogs. Classes began in mid-semester with daily sled dog health checks including how to identify hot spots, feet problems and other health issues. Students participated in daily feeding, dog yard maintenance, and exercising dogs, and also learned how handle dogs and understand dog behavior. They learned about dog team positions and how to best work with dogs when traveling in the country. Students enjoyed mushing dogs! There were lessons about equipment including safety and fixing sleds. Students learned to work with lines; they made gang-lines, skijor lines, and leashes. Locals gathered to teach winter survival skills including setting up a wall tent, building an igloo and how to take care of themselves in the extreme cold, an in varying weather and snow.



Northway middle and high school students enrolled in the *Alaska Culture-Dog Mushing* class enjoyed hands-on learning with sled dogs. Students traveled to Roni's kennel in Tanacross and a kennel in TOK to learn the basics of caring and handling sled dogs. Mari and Roni traveled with a team of sled dogs in a carrier to teach students about care including watering, feeding, first aid, harnessing, handling and how to canicross. In the classroom, Mari taught students how to make their own neck and wrist warmers. In-class culture activities included learning how to bead and to cook traditional foods. Students also participated in multi-school gatherings at the Tok Dog Musers' Association Racetrack with the hands-on support of all AGSD dog musher teachers. During the last class of the semester, students practiced skiing, ran dogs on a sled, and learned biathlon skills from a traveling instructor! Some middle and high school students are also enrolled in an *A-CHILL Local Documentary* class learning photography and videography skills. Next semester they hope to learn finish more about final stages of production.



Tetlin middle school students enrolled in *Animal Science* have been keen to learn about dog care and health. Learning in the classroom has been greatly enhanced by Roni traveling to Tetlin once a week to teach. She used dogs in the classroom and outside to teach students about dog nutrition, routine dog health checks, identify and evaluate injuries, and when to consult a veterinarian. They have made progress on how to read a dog and better understand behavior relative to their environment. Students also learned about healthy ecosystems and the roles of predators and prey. During Mid-semester, students assisted Roni in de-worming village dogs and puppies. They went door-to-door to assessing the need for vaccinations and understanding the reasons why they are so important. Mari traveled to Tetlin to teach students how to sew neck and wrist warmers and how to dress in the winter to prevent frostbite. She taught students to use fids to make lines and also how to ski. Students had fun sledding!



Tetlin A-CHILL students were so interested in dog health including over-population, that they worked for over a month with Roni and the Tribe to plan and prepare a first-ever TETLIN CANINE HEALTH SPAY & NEUTER CLINIC before Christmas. The Tribe donated the Hall and community members volunteered to help. A veterinarian, veterinarian technician, and 4 A-CHILL staff worked closely with students for three days to evaluate the health and spay or neuter over 40 dogs. They helped vaccinate and de-worm an additional 25-30 dogs including puppies. Students learned how to prepare dogs for surgery, observe surgeries, monitor dogs after surgery, and do all necessary follow up care for each dog. They learned how to complete vaccination paperwork and importance of dog health records. The clinic allowed students to help their community while also earning school credit.



FREE
CANINE HEALTH
CLINIC



In partnership with Alaska Rural Veterinary Services (ARVS) and the Alaska Veterinary Association for Children Learning (AVAC), WE DON'T SPEAK AND WEAREN'T THE LISTENERS & THIS IS OURS (WELLS) FOR ALL.

Throughout the winter clinic will be visiting the Village of Tetlen and will provide spay, neuter, and other services. We will also offer deworming, ear cleaning, and more. These services are completely dependent on the health and safety of our Village.

DECEMBER 18th, 19th, & 20th
Thursday, Friday and Saturday
9:00 a.m. Daily AT
TETLEN TRIBAL HALL

