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Editor's Letter

Greetings!

Years ago, when I first joined Qajaq USA, I became hooked. I attended every event that I could, visited the [Forum](#) often and read everything that Qajaq USA published, which included *The Masik* and *The Journal*. As someone with a background in journalism, I wanted to get involved, and for the past few years I've worked alongside previous Editor, Tom Milani, as the Art Director of *The Masik*. Recently he handed along the torch, and I am now the Editor.

Given the change in staff, I also decided to give *The Masik* a makeover. The main change is that it will be delivered directly to your Inbox. I also decided to make the issues shorter, but more frequent, and plan to release four issues per year (on or around the first day of every season).

Many of us aren't aware of the history of Qajaq USA, and in this issue, Greg Stamer, the founder, discusses its creation. Marc Daniels talks about what's being done in Alaska to preserve traditions, and all of the Qajaq USA sanctioned events share what makes their event wonderful and unique.

Special thanks to Greg Stamer and Marc Daniels for writing articles, as well as to Chris Beckman, Sharon Bustamante, Dave Sides, Paul Steinberg, Fran Symes and Tony Schmitz for sending in articles about their events. Also, a huge thank you to Tony Schmitz for proofreading.

I hope that you enjoy this first electronic publication. However, if you don't want to receive it, please click the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom of the page. If you have article ideas, please send them to helen@greenlandorbust.org.

Have fun out there!

Helen Tozer-Wilson

Editor, *The Masik*

A Founder's View of the Creation of Qajaq USA

By Greg Stamer

Qajaq USA is the American Chapter of Qaannat Kattuffiat - the Greenland Kayak Association, and the first affiliated chapter outside of Greenland/Denmark. The creation of Qajaq USA was a team effort that involved a number of people and events that synergistically came together at the same time.

Qajaq USA owes its existence to the renaissance of Greenland kayaking skills and techniques that first happened in West Greenland in the 1980s. Many people were influential to these developments, and I apologize to those whose names are not mentioned. Among the most influential was seal catcher and kayaking maestro Manasse Mathaeussen. Although well into his seventies at the time, he was instrumental in keeping many East and West Greenland techniques alive by actively demonstrating and passing his skills on to a new generation of Greenlanders. Likewise, H.C. Petersen's writings, scholarship and interviews with an aging generation of kayak hunters saved much that might otherwise have been lost. Kaleraq Bech, the president of Qaannat Kattuffiat for many years, was among the young Greenlanders who were greatly moved by an exhibit of three ancient Greenland kayaks on loan from the Netherlands to West Greenland in 1984. Seeing these kayaks motivated them to create Qaannat Kattuffiat in order to preserve and promote Greenland's kayak traditions. John Heath, a kayak historian living in Texas (Qajaq USA's first honorary member), who by reporting on Qaannat Kattuffiat, as well as writing and lecturing about Greenland technique, and publishing videotapes of Greenlanders performing traditional maneuvers, provided the spark that helped ignite the Greenland-style movement in the United States.

For the American Greenland-style scene, a pivotal development happened in 1998 when Greenland champion Maligiaq Padilla, sponsored by John Heath, toured the United States and Canada, demonstrating his skills. Maligiaq started his tour at the Delmarva Retreat in Lewes, Delaware, bringing with him a genuine sealskin kayak and a sealskin tuilik. The following year Maligiaq returned to Delmarva along with Qaannat Kattuffiat president Kaleraq Bech and his wife Lone. Kaleraq was moved to see so many Greenland kayaks and paddles far from his homeland and announced before returning to Greenland that foreigners would, for the first time, be permitted to compete in the annual Greenland kayak championship!

To fully understand the remainder of the story, you need a glimpse of what the American sea kayaking scene was like in 1998. Although Greenland-style kayaking is a recognized and respected form of sea kayaking today, and Greenland-style events/instruction are becoming widely available, in the days before Qajaq USA, this was not the case. Very little information was available, and much of it was conflicting. There were few sources to turn to. For example, if you wanted to learn the balance brace or a roll, more than likely you had to spend hours fast-forwarding/rewinding VHS video footage and figure it out for yourself. To make matters even trickier, insular Greenland-style “camps” had begun to sprout in the USA with locally-developed techniques that were often stubbornly resistant to change, even when Greenlanders began sharing their kayaking knowledge.

Back in those days it was common to have to defend your choice of a “stick” on virtually every group outing that had mixed paddle types. Occasionally these interactions were heated and far more volatile than the usual “rudder versus skeg” and “feathered versus unfeathered” debates. The introduction of Greenland paddles, rolling methods and technique threatened to shake the very foundation of a number of pre-existing kayaking beliefs, and vested beliefs often do not change quickly or gracefully.

Kayakers attending “mainstream” training programs were often disallowed to extend their Greenland paddle (the mistaken rationale was that it would take too long to perform in a real-world situation). Due to the high-back decks common at the time that made a “layback” roll difficult and the popularity of the whitewater-inspired C-to-C roll, it was considered “poor form” to finish a roll on the aft deck (as per the standard Greenland roll), and such techniques were initially frowned upon. Techniques such as immersing your body in the water and finding a gentle balance point for side-sculling and the static (balance) brace

were completely alien. The canted blade stroke, where the paddle is held at an angle for the forward stroke was extremely controversial and took years to be accepted, even among Greenland-style paddlers.

When John Heath published the video “Greenlanders at Kodiak,” that featured a number of Greenland rolling methods, the reviewer for *Sea Kayaker* magazine wrote it was “illogical” that the rolls worked. Logic? This statement provides a telling hint of how drastically different Greenland-style was perceived to be as compared to the status quo. Questions abounded regarding how to reconcile this new discipline with existing programs and teachings, or whether it should simply be ignored as a passing fad.

More controversy occurred when a major paddling organization began formulating a “Greenland endorsement.” Due to mistakes and miscommunication on both sides, the announcement upset some Greenlanders who thought the program was certifying that the paddlers who took the course were equal to the best paddlers in Greenland. Arguments over semantics escalated, and some Greenlanders began to question if anything should be shared outside of Greenland for fear of it being appropriated. Even the complete Greenland “rolling list” was still unknown outside of Greenland at this time, and some Greenlanders preferred to keep it that way. John Heath stepped in to help cool the situation and invited me to act as a liaison. This event cemented my resolve that Greenland had to remain the center of Greenland-style paddling and mutual respect was key. Timetables had to follow “Greenland-time,” not busy mandates.

Although the times were chaotic and sometimes tense, there was an undeniable excitement of being on the cusp of something big that would change the kayaking world. Greenland-style paddling grew in America fostered by instructors such as Cindy Cole, Steve Burkhardt, Ray and Margaret Killen, Doug Van Doren, Keith Attenborough, George Gronseth and others, who were learning by watching videos, impromptu “jam sessions” and by pure trial and error.

Given this environment, with the Greenlanders unsure if they should share their knowledge, the large paddling organizations starting to eye the growing pool of Greenland-style paddlers and the opportunity for people outside of Greenland to compete in Greenland, it was clear that there needed to be an organization that was respectful to the roots of Greenland kayaking, accepted that Greenland was the center of Greenland kayaking and invited Greenland instructors to events as both a cultural exchange and to allow kayakers to learn directly from the source. The time was right for Qajaq USA.

I discussed all of this with Kaleraq Bech, while he was visiting Delmarva. He was very receptive to the idea. One of his key concerns was regarding the name. Would Americans know what “Qajaq” means, as in “Qajaq USA?” Given the many strange misspellings I have seen for “Qajaq USA” over the years, perhaps his concerns were justified!

In August 2000, Cindy Cole, Harvey Golden and I traveled to Nuuk, Greenland to compete in the first open Greenland National Championship. During the competition, Kaleraq invited me to speak to an assembly of Qaannat Kattuffiat officers, concerning the state of Greenland-style kayaking in the United States and the possibility of creating an American paddling organization affiliated with Qaannat Kattuffiat. The board was encouraged to hear news of growing outside interest in Greenland kayaking, and a long discussion ensued with many questions asked by the board. Later that summer Qaannat Kattuffiat voted and approved the creation of an American chapter, thus paving the way for the formation of Qajaq USA. In 2001 the Greenland kayaking forum was launched, and in 2002 Qajaq USA was incorporated as a non-profit organization and began accepting its first members later that spring.

I’m often asked why Qajaq USA wasn’t conceived as a much larger/more inclusive organization, to encompass more than just the USA. Keeping the organization smaller and “local” was by design and intent. A large global organization might be tempted to assume ownership and control of Greenland-style kayaking, which would leave the Greenlanders on the outside. Also, at the time I thought that the competitions would prove much more popular, and the Greenlanders preferred for teams outside of Greenland to be based on nationality, so it only made sense to split external chapters of Qaannat Kattuffiat by nationality.

We have come a long way since that day Maligiaq first appeared in Delmarva in 1998 with a sealskin kayak, and I am proud of what has been accomplished. I would like to thank our Greenland friends, everyone who has helped to support Qajaq USA and all those who continue to guide its course in the fulfillment of our mission.

Qajaq USA Membership

Your membership is vital to Qajaq USA! Without your generosity we would be unable to fulfill our mission and help share and promote the rich traditions and techniques of Greenland kayaking. Whether it's through participation in our on-line forums, reading our MASIK newsletter and Qajaq USA Journals, attending one of our sanctioned events (with Qajaq USA sponsored gear), being inspired by the Greenland guests we bring to events or paddling our expanding fleet of replica skin-on-frame kayaks – we hope you agree that your membership support delivers an outstanding value. Click [HERE](#) to become a member (or renew your membership).



Chiludax; It Is Returning

By Marc Daniels

My introduction to Alaska's Native Unangax (Aleut) community back in the early 1990s came with a certain sense of urgency. The iqyax, more commonly known by the Russian name "baidarka," had all but disappeared from use by the Unangax people, and there were no tradition bearers remaining to teach a new generation the intricacies of making and using them. The exquisite sea-going vessel that had sustained the Unangax way of life for millennia was in danger of becoming extinct. After more than nine

thousand years of continual use and refinement, it was alarming to see that the crowning achievement of the Unangax people had been reduced to relics from a mysterious past; things to look at in museums. Unangax elders were determined to reclaim their people's legendary kayaking heritage by whatever means necessary.

It was at that time that I received an invitation to travel to the island of Saint Paul, in the central Bering Sea, to lead a two-week project building an iqyax (pronounced ik'yah) at the high school. I had been studying the skin-on-frame watercraft of Greenland and Alaska for several years, and had managed to learn the basic building knowledge through obsessive reverse-engineering, trial and error, reading early journal accounts and through close examination of museum specimens. I jumped at this opportunity to learn more by actually working with the Unangax people and by paddling traditional watercraft in the northern waters they were designed for.

That project on Saint Paul Island was a big success, and produced the first iqyax to be paddled in the Pribilof Islands in living memory. It was a profoundly powerful moment that launched a new push to bring the iqyax back from "relic" to "real," and everyone involved was eager to build on the momentum. By the time the two week project was finished I had convinced the superintendent of the Pribilof Islands School District to hire me to teach a one semester high school class I'd imagined which was built around iqyax making. I had found my calling and a purpose for the passion I'd been following for so long, and there was no going back.

In the decades that followed I taught that class many more times and continued to travel throughout the islands teaching traditional boat building. Together with my students we've made many iqyan (plural of iqyax) and qayaqs, utilizing driftwood and making them as authentically as possible. The underlying aim has always been a simple one; to inspire a new generation of builders and paddlers by getting them out on the water in traditional watercraft. We believe that the iqyax will survive in a real sense only as long as it remains relevant to contemporary Unangax life. Building them for display or "because you should" is not going to have a lasting impact. We feel strongly that our iqyan need to be built to be used. They need to be real.

Having built our first few iqyan and uluxtan (the two-hole version of the Unangax sea kayak) at the high school woodshop, we encountered the daunting obstacle of legal liability. Though well-intentioned, the

school simply couldn't allow the iqyan that were built there to be paddled out on the Bering Sea except on special occasions. It became clear to us that we needed to get organized and do our work on our own, outside of the school. We formed a paddling club, The Saint Paul Island Ayuxtam Club, working wherever we could beg or borrow space to do our boat building. And we spent time paddling.

Meanwhile a broader skinboat revival was spreading throughout coastal Alaska, led by a small handful of builder/teachers who, like me, were invited to the villages to share their knowledge and to learn along with Native Unangax, Alutiq, Yup'ik and Inupiaq students. Many of us were non-Native teachers, yet we were made to feel welcome and honored by the trust we were shown in villages such as Cold Bay, Unalaska, Atka, Akutan, Sand Point, Saint Paul, Saint George and Brevig Mission. It was explained to me by one Unangax elder that just as the traditional knowledge had disappeared with the arrival of non-Native people, it was natural that the knowledge would be returned by a non-Native. "For us," he said, "you are that person." I'm grateful beyond words to be allowed to play my role in repairing what had been a broken circle of tradition.

Then in 2004 the Saint Paul Unangax people were invited by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe in Washington's Puget Sound to participate in something called Inter-Tribal Canoe Journeys. The Lower Elwha Klallam were the host tribe that year for the canoe journey, which meant that cedar canoe tribes from throughout the Puget Sound and coastal Washington and as far away as Southeast Alaska and British Columbia would be paddling together, making their way to the Elwha River where ceremonies and potlatch festivities would happen. The Saint Paul Unangax paddlers would be honored guests, traveling the farthest to attend. The invitation created a sudden need for a new fleet of skinboats. I got the call to come back for another wave of iqyax and uluxtax building and to help our paddlers prepare.

We got busy up on Saint Paul, building a three-hatch uluxtax and a few single-hatch iqyan for the journey. Energy and enthusiasm were high as we worked and trained, and struggled to raise the funds we'd need to travel with our vessels to the "Lower 48." Preparation was intense, but nothing could have prepared us for the Journey itself, or the awesome experience at Journey's end of seeing eighty-one huge cedar canoes lined up on the shore filled with pullers holding their paddles high in respect while many hundreds of tribal members drummed, sang and welcomed the Journey crews. It was truly a life-changing moment for all of us, and it strengthened our commitment to our work for the survival of traditional iqyax building. Inter-Tribal Canoe Journeys gave us a new purpose for building iqyan and for training. Since that first

Journey our Unangax “canoe family” has participated in three more Tribal Journeys, and we’ll surely be rejoining the Journey as each new generation comes of age.

During another trip to Saint Paul In 2012 to lead yet another iqyax project it occurred to me that after those many years of teaching, there was still no person on the island who was ready to take over my position and be the iqyax instructor there. I realized that I was teaching the children of some of my original students, which hit me like a ton of bricks. Even though we’d made great progress since the early days, back when no one alive had seen an iqyax actually being built or paddled, we were far from being finished with bringing the technology back. It struck me that what was missing was the full immersion approach to learning the building process, which would have been the traditional way it was learned. That was the genesis of the idea for MakeAccess Iqyax Apprenticeships, a non-profit that I founded in 2013 in partnership with The Ink People Center for The Arts. The program is designed to take each Native apprentice through the entire iqyax design and building process several times, and to finish with the apprentices teaching others what they’ve learned. Last year our first apprentice, a young woman from Saint Paul named Samantha Zacharof, spent two months building two iqyan in my northern California workshop, and has since returned to Saint Paul Island to lead her own project. That’s the objective of MakeAccess; to create tradition bearers. www.facebook.com/Makeaccess

Currently throughout Native Alaska traditional qayaq and iqyax building is gaining a lot of momentum, thanks in large part to the popularity and tribal support of Native culture camps. Many villages host their own camp, and most of those have been intent on learning the ancient craft of building and paddling the skinboats that are their heritage. I have been involved in recent years with these camps along with a few other dedicated builder/teachers such as Andrew Abyo (Alutiq), Mike Livingston (Unangax), Wolfgang Brinck and Mitchell Poling. The result of all of this iqyax activity is a new generation of Native Alaskan youth who are quite familiar with the skin-on-frame iqyan and qayaqs that their parents were only able to see in books and museum displays. I might even dare to say it’s starting to become somewhat common in villages like Atka, Akutan, Saint Paul and Unalaska to see Native paddlers out in their iqyan and uluxtan on fair weather days!

So what’s next? Certainly more building and more paddling. Some of us are working on creating an event in the Aleutian Islands that would be modeled loosely on the Greenland National Qajaq Championship, which has been such an inspiration to us. The Unangam Iqyaa Championship would be a gathering of

Unangax people from villages throughout the Aleutian Islands, Pribilof Islands, Russia's Commander Islands and from urban Alaska. The event would include an iqyax race and competitions in rolling and atlatl dart throwing, in addition to sharing traditional dance, arts and foods. It would likely take place on the centrally-located island of Unalaska, and would hopefully become a perfect gathering place for cultural sharing and teaching. And of course, working to stay strong and build paddling skills in preparation for an annual championship would carry its own health benefits.

Looking back over the past twenty-five years it's easy to see the great gains that have been made, though they were often hard to recognize at the time. It's exciting to be witness now to so many Native communities reclaiming their rich cultural heritage in so many ways, and to imagine a time when traditional qayaqs and iqyan are a common sight again throughout the Alaskan Islands and coastal waters. That time is now. An ancient and brilliant technology is once again relevant.





Marc Daniels has been studying and building the indigenous skin-on-frame watercraft of Alaska, Canada and Greenland since 1988. Operating as [True North Boats](#), he teaches boatbuilding workshops throughout Alaska and at [Mind's Eye Manufactory](#), his northern California makerspace/school of craft.

Marc and his wife, Leah operate the non-profit program, [MakeAccess Iqyax Apprenticeships](#) hosting Native apprentices at Mind's Eye Manufactory and their home.

Dear Fellow Traditional Paddler,

The Qajaq USA Events committee is asking for three minutes of your time today to help support the Qajaq USA mission to preserve, study and promote the traditions and techniques of Greenland kayaking. We are asking you to help by completing a short survey to help shape the future of the Qajaq USA fleet.

We thank you for your time and attention. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey.

Qajaq USA Sanctioned Events

One of the primary ways that Qajaq USA fulfils its mission to preserve, study and promote the traditions and techniques of Greenland kayaking is through a series of events that are sanctioned each year. Sanctioned events follow a series of guidelines that ensure the main focus of the event is on Greenland paddling and the other skills associated with the qajaq culture. Additionally Qajaq USA sanctioned events are non-commercial, no one is paid for their services, teaching is through a process of mentoring where everyone is both a teacher and a learner. Qajaq USA maintains a fleet of kayaks that represent the many diverse designs found in the different regions of Greenland. These kayaks, along with a collection of paddles, harpoons and traditional paddling clothes, such as tuiiliks, are made available at each sanctioned

event so the attendees can experience a close facsimile of the traditional Greenland paddling experience. Qajaq USA's sanctioned events are described below.



Delmarva Paddlers Retreat

Since 1987 the Delmarva Paddlers Retreat has been a premier instructional event for sea-kayakers. In 2001 it became the first paddling event in the USA to become all Traditional. Qajaq USA was formed during that event, and the rest as they say is history. Often referred to as simply Delmarva or The Retreat, is about learning sea kayaking with a Greenlandic flair.

The Retreat is held on the Rehoboth Bay along coastal Delaware. Its proximity to protected bays and the ocean allows for a variety of instruction and kayaking opportunities. From the beginning Delmarva has invited leaders in the kayaking world. This year the event has Anders Thygesen coming in from Norway and John Pedersen from Greenland. Qajaq USA's mother ship in Greenland, Qaannat Kattuffiat, decided to take advantage of John's attendance and will be sending several of its officers as well. The QUSA leadership is planning a special reception for them.

Delmarva is, as are all of the QUSA sanctioned events, a non-commercial event. All of the staff and mentors are volunteers. Using the mentoring approach where everyone learns and everyone teaches, the event continues to attract very qualified instructors. From the first time paddler, to advanced, and even the expedition paddler, the mentoring approach allows for instruction for everyone. Rolling has always been a large part of Greenland-style kayaking, and you can learn the complete repertoire of Greenland competition rolls at Delmarva. The area has large salt water resources, and Delmarva is always looking for

ways to use them. This year Anders, John Pedersen and Chris Crowhurst will be working on open water skills such as strokes, combat rolls and sea sock rescues. There are some tidal currents close by, so the event expects to use them too.

The evenings are filled with interesting and informative presentations with plenty of time to socialize. New for this year the event has team kayak building. Details are on the website, but teams will assemble skin-on-frame kayaks, wrap them in plastic and then race and roll them for points. Paddle making is a regular workshop, although by the time this goes to print it will likely be filled.

All levels of abilities will fully enjoy the Delmarva experience, which is held at Camp Arrowhead on the western shore of Rehoboth Bay in Lewes, Delaware. The camp is located on a shallow, tidal bay with sandy beach access. All classes, meals and lodging are on the grounds of the camp, so it is not necessary to pack away your gear and kayak daily.

The Retreat will be held Thursday, Oct. 8 to Sunday, Oct. 11, so sign up quickly if you haven't done so already. www.delmarvapaddlersretreat.org



Qajaq TC (Michigan Training Camp)

Qajaq TC, also known as Michigan Training Camp, takes place in August in the northwestern lower peninsula of Michigan. Sixty people arrive by kayak at a kid's camp situated on a wooded peninsula with no road access. The camp offers a warm inland lake on one side and on the other, a long sand beach and the "big lake." Lake Michigan, a fresh water sea, often presents opportunities for working on surf skills and rolling in conditions, offering challenges to both mentors and attendees.

Qajaq TC has been described by some as an intimate gathering, resembling a family reunion as much as a traditional paddling event. The secluded setting, the childlike spirit of the camp and the focus on the traditional philosophy that everyone is a teacher, everyone is a student all contribute to an environment of friendship and collaboration. Attendees are encouraged to further their own journeys by sharing what they've learned of rolling, rescue skills and managing their kayaks on the water. The first mentor development weekend was held in June of 2015 to help those interested become more skilled at mentoring, and there was a significant amount of interest. Most of those who participated were in the water at this year's camp helping others to learn.

Training Camp continues to remain a small event due to the size of the venue and the fact that all gear and food is transported to camp by boat. Lodging in cabins and all meals are included, along with most land based and all on-water activities. There is always something to do. There have been kayaks skinned, a kayak built, neoprene workshops, norsaq and paddle carving workshops, float bag construction, rope gymnastics, yoga, stupid paddle tricks, rolling demos, harpoon throwing, strokes classes, surf sessions, skin-on-frame rescue classes and endless rolling.

Not only is Qajaq TC sanctioned by Qajaq USA, but the event also receives an enormous amount of support from attendees through donations of items to the raffle, silent and live auctions as well as plenty of competitive bidding. They are a very generous group, and many travel long distances to attend Qajaq TC.

The days at Training Camp begin with the sunrise on Lower Herring Lake, continue with the sharing of traditional skills, laughter and good food throughout the day, ending with a glowing bonfire on the Lake Michigan beach where laughter, qajaq talk and music mix with the sound of waves and a star filled sky.

www.qajaqtc.org



Hudson River Greenland Festival

HRGF, the Hudson River Greenland Festival, was organized in 2003 by Wayne Gilchrest, Mark Price and Eric Eckley. The first three years featured a one-day event at Norrie Point on the Hudson River, including Greenland qajaq demos, races, rolling and ropes. To give participants the real feel of Greenland there were contests in apple bobbing (in icewater) and Popcicle eating.

Sadly, in 2005 Wayne moved away from the area and the Norrie Point facilities shut down for renovations. Four intrepid Greenland converts (Jack Gilman, Maggie Atkins, Wes Ostertag and Unkel Dave Sides) created the "HRGF Team" and made a valiant attempt to keep the event alive in 2006 but it was to no avail.

They did succeed in resurrecting the HRGF in 2007, as a multiple day event, 66 miles south at Croton Point Park. They brought in Turner Wilson and Cheri Perry to coordinate the on-water program with instruction becoming the main focus.

In 2009 the team made the decision to seek Qajaq USA sanction, providing participants with better opportunities for use of equipment and access to skilled volunteer mentors. Alison Sigethy ran the on-water program for the next five years, followed by Nancy and Wayne Hill in 2014. In addition, a concerted effort was made to bring in Greenlanders to share their culture and traditional skills as well as take home some of our passion for passing on those skills. Jenna Padilla, Ulu Rosbach and Ari Josephson joined the event in 2014.

HRGF 2015 (#12): The HRGF Team of Rosanna Lovecchio, Anita Mellusi, Jack Gilman, Kevin Kehoe and Unkel Dave Sides brought in many special guests this year, including Maligiaq Padilla and two of his high school students Ryan Topkok and Cameron Okbaok from Alaska. Danielle and Nick Steffey joined the event from Michigan, providing an ongoing norsaq-carving workshop at the beach. Also from Michigan, Tim Gallaway kept many hardy souls busy with instruction and contests on the Greenland Ropes. Don Beale and Joanne Barta flew in from the west coast to run the popular paddle-carving class. From everywhere/nowhere, Dubside helped out everywhere as usual, on ropes, water and yoga. Gary Grzbeck stepped in to run the on-water program. Sarah and Nate Apgar kept a small but excited group of youths busy and learning. We hope to continue to improve and build on our success as we prepare for HRGF #13.

Our HRGF motto is "Pay it Forward," a nod to the 2000 movie with Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt and Haley Joel Osment. Our interpretation is that we pass on what we know, share our experiences and learn from each other. We are all students. We are all teachers. Let's all "pay it forward." www.hrgf.org



South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayaking Symposium

South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayaking Symposium (SSTIKS) is held in the early summer at Twanoh State Park in Washington state. SSTIKS is a family friendly weekend event featuring some of the best instructors and competitors in Greenland-style kayaking. Now in its 13th year, SSTIKS is going strong.

SSTIKS organizers talk about "SSTIKSishness" - a familial atmosphere of non-commercialism and communality, reverence for traditional tools and techniques, as well as emphasis on safety and high

quality instruction. Coming to SSTIKS always feels like coming home.

The SSTIKS kid's track was launched in 2005, and it is still the only large kayaking event with an active kid's program. Each day, instruction in paddle skills, rolling and ropes helps nurture the next generation. It is wonderful to witness the growth of these young paddlers on the ropes and on the water.

Many attendees at SSTIKS have a love for Inuit culture. This is reflected in the beautifully crafted skin boats, the careful following of rolling traditions and harpoon skills, as well as the respectful use of Inuit terms for rolls and rope maneuvers.

SSTIKS is kayaking with a stress on quality education. With classes at all levels, the event draws from local skilled paddlers as well as coaches worldwide. Aside from paddling and strokes, there are classes on harpooning, skin boat rescues and lots of rolling practice. The event makes it easy for newcomers to experience traditional tools - there is an arsenal of boats and paddles to borrow.

SSTIKS has a number of awesome traditions, among them the rolling competition, communal meals, a salmon barbecue and an auction. There is a keynote speaker every year. The symposium culminates in the Wedding of Palo Race. Modeled after the movie shot in the 30's by Knud Rasmussen, the race has four legs - Forward and Backward Sprint, Seal Tow and the ever popular Escape With The Bride. The Seal Tow consists of a "seal," often a kid, imitating a tasty tidbit brought to the bride. The last leg sees a passenger/bride, hopefully the lightest member, carried sitting back to back behind the paddler/groom.

Tradition forms its heart, but SSTIKS is not a static event. The event continues to build a connection with Harvey Golden's historical replicas.

In 2016, the event will host a kayaking film festival. Peter Gengler, keynote speaker in 2015, has already launched such a film festival at Delmarva; and SSTIKS is excited to be bringing it to the west coast. The next SSTIKS takes place from June 10 to 12, 2016, and welcomes attendees at all skill levels. Bring yourself. Bring the kids. www.qajaqpnw.org



Traditional Inuit Paddlers of the Southeast

Frequently events such as TIPS (Traditional Inuit Paddlers of the Southeast) are actually formalizations of casual meet-ups among paddling groups or friends. It was pretty much the opposite for TIPS. Two transplanted South Carolinians who discovered quite by accident that each was passionate about traditional paddling sought to bring together the sparse population of traditional paddlers in the Southeast to share experiences, knowledge and the fun of developing new skills.

Equally, they wanted to introduce the skills and history that is “traditional qajaqing” to the uninitiated. For some in the Southeast where water temperatures in winter are warmer than those of Greenland in summer, and air temperatures soar even higher, the Arctic association and attendant garb can actually serve as a deterrent rather than a draw.

Inspired by the Delmarva Paddler's Retreat, the two set about to develop something along that same vein, and were fortunate enough to have the support of Qajaq USA, as well as the untiring moral and physical assistance of Chris Beckman, organizer for Delmarva.

In May of 2014, TIPS became the newest sanctioned QUSA event, with 19 people and three guest mentors in attendance. The majority of attendees were from South Carolina, with a couple each from North Carolina and Florida. The three attendees who came as newbies departed with an appreciation of traditional paddling history, strokes, maneuvers and one or more rolls. Everyone left with smiles on their faces and pride in their accomplishments.

Experience from the first TIPS sharpened the advertising acumen, and two magazine articles were published about the event. So, by the second TIPS in May 2015, outreach had expanded throughout the Southeastern region and brought in folks from Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. Nine of the 27 attendees came for an introduction to traditional paddling, but left committed to learning more. Achievements, enjoyment and most importantly, the sense of community that had developed point to the success of the event. They were on their way to reaching the original objectives and goals. Now the focus is on continuing to develop the event.

Perhaps the largest challenge has been to find a “perfect” location for the event. The searchlight seems to be coming into focus, however, and they are hopeful that TIPS will be held May 2016 in a new permanent location. www.traditionalpaddlersretreat.com



The Traditional Paddlers Gathering

The Traditional Paddlers Gathering started out as a simple idea about ten years ago. A few Minnesota skin-on-frame qajaq builders intended to meet on a beach, yap about our projects, swap boats around, maybe break open a six-pack and go home at the end of the day.

Then Jo Hamilton got on board. She had a larger vision. Rent a northern Minnesota resort. Cook all the meals. Bring in mentors. Host a throng. The Gathering was born.

Jo died in 2008 after an extended illness. The Gathering continues, now in a lakeside setting in Lake Carlos State Park near Alexandria, Minnesota.

During its early years, the Gathering had a rolling-ocentric focus, as participants struggled to put together a few rolls from the Greenland repertoire. Since then the event has expanded to include more examination of Far North culture, greater attention to strokes and maneuvers with native-style paddles, qajaqs and iqyax, demonstrations of skin-on-frame building and rescue techniques, plus an annual “seal” hunt.

Billed as north central Minnesota’s premier hunt of styrofoam seals, the contest offers participants a chance to manage a fraction of the gear that would appear on a genuine hunting qajaq. It also allows our mighty hunters to experience the difficulty of hitting much of anything with a harpoon, other than their bow. It’s a way to gain a tiny understanding of the skills necessary to make a living based on paddling and hunting.

In the same spirit — which is to say, poised between comedy and dim appreciation — this year the event added a hand-line fishing contest to the Gathering's line-up. The idea again is to realize the complexity of managing simultaneously a qajaq, paddle, line, net, stringer and struggling fish.

Our intent at the Gathering is to come lightly to a deeper understanding of kayaking's historical roots. We try to do this in a way that has more the feeling of a family get-together than of a rigorously structured event.

If you’re reading this, you’re welcome to join the family next September. www.qajaqmn.org

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The Masik welcomes contributions and queries. If you have an idea for an article, but aren't sure if it's right for The Masik, or if you want to discuss it further before committing to writing, contact Helen Wilson, the Editor. She can be reached by e-mail (helen@greenlandorbust.org) and by snail mail (PO Box 4183, Arcata, CA 95518).

