

# *The Winter Bear Project*

## 2014 Yukon – Koyukuk Tour



— A PLAY BY ANNE HANLEY —

*Inspired by the life of Koyukon Athabaskan elder Sidney Huntington*



*The Winter Bear* is a play that tells the story of an Alaska Native teenager who rises above the traumas of his past to become a leader with the help of mentor Sidney Huntington and a Winter Bear.

The Winter Bear Project combines the play with outreach developed in cooperation with rural Alaskan communities. Native Nonprofits provide Behavioral Health support. Communities provide us with lodging and a place to stage the show and arrange a community potluck before the show. Our actors and crew lead workshops in a variety of creative disciplines with students in local schools while we are there. Professional teaching artists also lead workshops in a variety of creative disciplines with local students.

- **Broaden awareness about the causes of Alaska Native teen suicide**
- **Stimulate dialogue about these causes**
- **Promote healing and healthy decision-making through our School Workshops**

In September 2014, The Winter Bear Project traveled to six sites along the Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers to deliver a message of hope through live theatre performance.



*Winter Bear cast members with kids in Kaltag*

*“The little ones laughed and laughed. The old ones cried and cried.” – Nulato audience member  
(translated from American Sign)*



*Many crosses in villages like Ruby mark graves of young people lost to suicide.*

## 2014 TCC Yukon-Koyukuk Tour Schedule

April 10	Preview at Effie Kokrine Charter School
August 29	Dress Rehearsal Show, Boys & Girls Home of Alaska, Fairbanks
September 2	Workshops for educators, Tanana Evening Community show, Tanana School
September 4	Workshops, Ruby Evening Community Show, Merrelaine A. Kangas School
September 5	Workshops with Nulato & Galena Interior Learning Academy students Evening Community show, Andrew K. Demoski School
September 8	Workshops, Kaltag Evening Community show, Kaltag School
September 10	Workshops, Huslia Evening Community show, Jimmy Huntington School
September 12	Workshops Allakaket Evening Community show, Allakaket School



*Workshop leader Erick Robertson plays a game of "Freeze" with Kaltag students*

## Play Attendance

Community	# in attendance	# Community Members (2013)	% of Community
Boys & Girls	58	n/a	n/a
Tanana	61	251	24%
Ruby	85	170	50%
Nulato	107	270	40%
Kaltag	64	194	33%
Huslia	92	281	33%
Allakaket	65	107	61%

## 532 Total Play Attendance

*"It was amazing, I love how honest it was." –Audience Member, Tanana*



*Allakaket ladies reading their programs. William Bradshaw photo*

<b>Workshops</b>			
Community	# Students in school	Student Contact hours	Instructor Hours
Boys & Girls	48	96	32
Tanana	20	30	32
Ruby	28	51	25
Nulato	38	90	13
Kaltag	23	82	15
Huslia	87	140	36
Allakaket	35	55	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>168</b>

*"I'm never going to forget you guys. [Playing theatre games] is the most fun I've ever had."  
-Kaltag Middle School student*



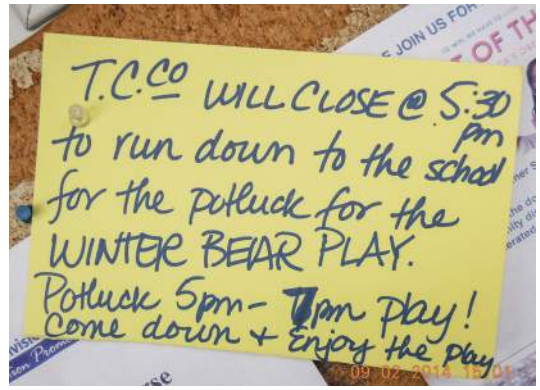
*Debra Naaqtuuq Dommek (Miranda) telling an Iñupiaq story for Kadey Ambrose (Lynx) and Ruby students*

**Workshops offered, Fall 2014: Theater Games, Native Dance, Hip Hop Dance, Kung Fu, Creative Movement, Telling Your Story, Beginning Guitar**

## TANANA



*Tanana kids goofing off after the show*



*Sign outside Tanana Commercial Store*

*"It brought hope into my eyes, to keep encouraging our children not to give up but to seek out our culture!" – Audience Member, Tanana*

*"[The play] shows we can be a strength to each other."  
– Audience Member, Tanana*

## RUBY



*The Merrelene A. Kangas school gym featured a mural of pictures of current Ruby residents superimposed over old pictures. The kids were eager to point out pictures of themselves and their relatives.*



*Some Galena folks came by boat for the show in Ruby*



*Brian Wescott (Sidney Huntington) jokes with Emmitt Peters, Sr., after Ruby show.*

## NULATO



Students from Galena Interior Learning Academy boated down to Nulato for *The Winter Bear* performance.



GILA students loading up to return home



Sidney Huntington paid us a surprise visit, arriving by boat from Galena for the Nulato performance.

*"[The Winter Bear]...bridged the gap between native beliefs (now/then) with real struggles that teens face everywhere." – Audience Member, Nulato*

*"I happened to be in Nulato just after the Winter Bear Project and people there were saying that it was the first time in years they had such a large crowd attend an event." – Kerry Boyd, Superintendent, Yukon – Koyukuk School District*



Sidney Huntington told the audience about the effects of suicide on his family.

## KALTAG



A young lady from Kaltag practicing her Hip Hop moves.



Nancy Mason, Principal, Dolly Solomon, Cook, and staff prepare a special salmon lunch for us at Kaltag.

*"Thank you again for coming to Kaltag; the entire experience was exceptional." – Nancy Mason, Principal, Kaltag School*

## HUSLIA



Kevin Lee (Wolverine) and Clayton Ticknor (Wolf) packing up in Huslia.



Shirley Vent at Huslia show



Debra Naaqtuuq Dommek (Miranda) and Anne Hanley (Playwright) decorate a ceiling tile for Jimmy Huntington School, Huslia.

*"Never give up on a person." -Audience Member, Huslia*

## ALLAKAKET



Laurie Beam, Principal, whips up dinner for 65 in Allakaket



Johnson Moses entertains the crowd in Allakaket. William Bradshaw photo



Clayton Ticknor (Wolf) and Sarah Mitchell (Raven) warm up the crowd in Allakaket



Lydia Bergman at Allakaket show. William Bradshaw photo



Allakaket kids in potluck line

*"It made me glad to be alive." - Audience Member, Allakaket*

*"I got PTSD from the things that were done to me, starting way back when I was a kid. Now I struggle with that. This (The Winter Bear) was a hard thing for me to watch, but it was a good thing because it gives me hope." -Audience member, Allakaket*



## Evaluation Component

Evaluations, consisting of six questions plus space for comments, were either directly distributed to audience members or made available to them after every performance.

### Evaluations Forms Completed

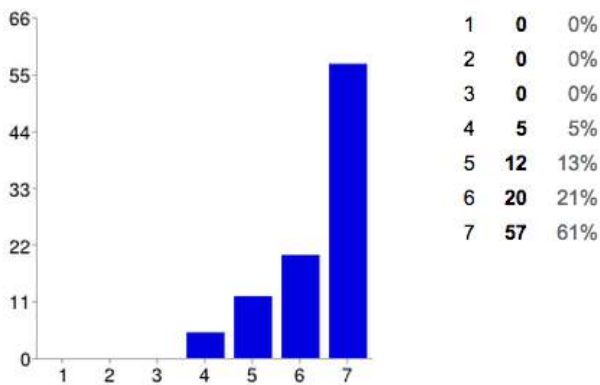
**Fairbanks: 29**  
**Yukon-Koyukuk Tour: 94**  
**Total: 123**

*“Great story about NOT QUITTING and survival.”  
 –Audience Member, Tanana*

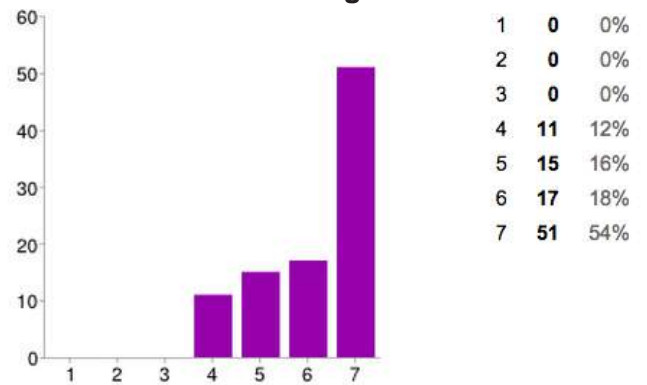


*The Winter Bear set all packed up and ready to fly home to Fairbanks.*

### Did the play make you feel hopeful?

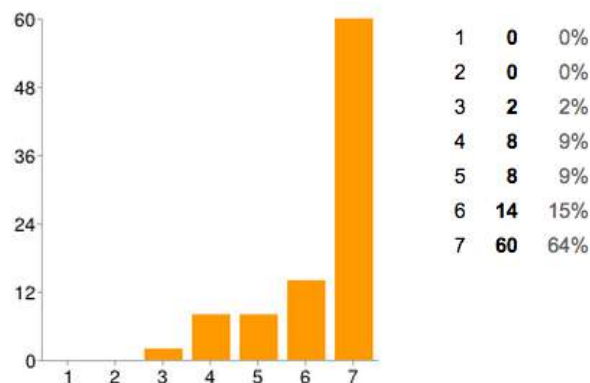


### Did the play help you understand someone who was thinking of suicide?



*“Thank you for coming here and showing everybody how wonderful they are and that suicide could hurt a lot of loved ones and friends.” –Audience Member, Boys & Girls Home of Alaska.*

### Does seeing this play make you more likely to reach out to a friend who may have suicidal thoughts?



# **The Winter Bear Project**

Anne Hanley  
**Playwright & Producer**

Kadey Ambrose & Sarah Mitchell  
**Assistant Producers**

Erick Robertson  
**Director**

Amanda Bent  
**Tour Manager**

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The Winter Bear Project

## **Thanks to our sponsors**

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