



# Technology Key to Revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge and Culture

AUCKLAND, --SELECT--, NEW ZEALAND, April 9, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Revitalization of indigenous knowledge and culture is at a tipping point, with technology the key to success, says New Zealand based technology company [Kiwa Digital](#) who released today a new digital book in the Cup'ik language.

[Arnaq Tunucillek-Illu](#) (The Young Lady and the Loon) was created by students and teachers from the village of Chevak in Western Alaska. It is a traditional tale that tells of a mysterious visitor's supernatural secret and a young lady's perilous curiosity. This Cup'ik language story is illustrated with intricate dioramas depicting traditional cultural activities.

The book is used as part of Kashunamiut School District's Cup'ik language immersion program, and contains features that promote word recognition to build beginner level Cup'ik language reading skills. It also includes interactive sound touch zones and other audio effects that will immerse readers in this atmospheric story.

To date, a series of fifteen Cup'ik language digital storybooks featuring interactive multimedia elements have been created and are available free in the App Store. Making these books has been a collaborative effort between the school leadership, students, teachers, the [Association of Alaska School Boards](#), and Kiwa Digital.

Accurately transcribing a traditional story that had only been passed on orally requires a dedicated team of fluent speakers. For the production of the Arnaq Tunucillek-Illu, translating the oral story to text and audio required participation of a Cup'ik linguist, an elder fluent in Cup'ik, a narrator fluent in Cup'ik, and a focus group of five Cup'ik speakers to review the final text for precision and correctness. It is a process that can take months to complete.

Lillian Olson, a teacher at Chevak school whose voice appears in many of the books as the narrator and other characters, has worked on the digital book project since it began. To all those who have been involved in making Cup'ik language books a reality, "Quyana Cakneq! (Thank You Very Much!)," says Olson.

Alaska has twenty Alaska Native languages designated as official languages. It is estimated that some of these languages have fewer than 100 fluent speakers left, most elderly, placing them at risk of being lost. This urgency has sparked statewide efforts to preserve Native languages and make them more accessible to younger generations.

"We congratulate the students and teachers at Chevak school in Alaska who have created this authentic means to promote indigenous Cup'ik culture and language," said Steven Renata, CEO of Kiwa Digital.

"Around the world groups like the Kashunamiut School District and Alaska Association of School Boards are putting huge effort into preserving languages, " said Renata. "This is paying off and we are now at a tipping point in terms of their preservation, with technology the key to success."

## ABOUT

### Kashunamiut School District (KSD)

In 2003 KSD implemented a Cup'ik immersion program where digital learning is a key means to promote Cup'ik culture and language. Through a cooperative venture with Association of Alaska School Boards, KSD now has a total of 15 talking storybook apps written and narrated entirely in the Cup'ik language of Western Alaska, providing an excellent foundation for learning to read and speak Cup'ik at any age. The apps including the latest release are available on the App Store

### Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)

AASB represents Alaska's 53 school districts and assists school boards in providing quality public education focused on student achievement. Since 2005, the Consortium for Digital Learning (CDL), an initiative of AASB, has helped launch over a hundred 1-to-1 laptop and tablet projects in 28 school districts across Alaska. CDL provides services to support digital teaching and learning in today's connected schools.

### Kiwa Digital Ltd

Kiwa works with indigenous groups around the world, using technology to preserve ancestral knowledge in relevant and accessible formats. In North America Kiwa supports the language revitalization work of the Kashunamiut School District, Native Village of Afognak and the AASB. It has also recently secured funding for a trans-media project in Canada. Kiwa has appointed Alaska based Newtek Education Systems Ltd to introduce its products and services to Alaska and other US states.

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