

Speakers to Graduates: Take Personal Responsibility

Remarks to graduates at the Thirty-Eighth Annual Commencement at the University of Alaska Southeast had a similar theme. Take personal responsibility for the state of the world and society and see what you can do to make positive change. Chancellor John Pugh opened the two hour ceremony quoting President Barack Obama, "What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility—a recognition on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world."

Katie Hurley, who served as the Chief Clerk of the 1956 Alaska Constitutional Convention urged graduates to: "Get involved with your government. Go to meetings. Get active. Write letters to the editor. Talk to your legislator."

Hurley's commencement address drew an enthusiastic response from the Masters, Bachelors and Associates degree graduates in business, liberal arts, environmental science, marine biology, social science, education and other programs.

Hurley's speech was largely an Alaska history lesson. She fondly reminisced her time beginning in 1940 as a clerk-stenographer and then Chief of Staff to "EG" Territorial Governor Ernest Gruening. "He was from the East coast and he was an intellectual, Harvard graduate. I was from Juneau. I'd never seen the New York Times, and now we got it in the mail!"

In a post-commencement interview Hurley, who went to secretarial school instead of college said, "It was like I was being given a college education just working for him. He took the time when I asked questions to tell me all about it. I

was like a sponge." She remembers him most importantly as a mentor and progressive statesman. "Gruening was on a first name basis with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He spoke five languages."



Student speaker Forest Kvasnikoff quoted Martin Luther King in his speech, "We will all have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people." Kvasnikoff issued a directive to his graduating class peers. "You have been given, by virtue of your graduation here today, the opportunity to tackle some of our society's, indeed our world's troubles and hardships."

Hurley later noted that she had not seen young people as enthusiastic about civic involvement since John F. Kennedy was in office. "I was at the Democratic Convention when Barack Obama was nominated and it was thrilling."

The Chancellor closed his remarks with faith in the graduates as Alaska marks a half century of statehood. "I am confident that the graduating Class of 2009 can pickup the torch and guide us through the next 50 years."

The UAS Juneau campus conferred 300 degrees (Associates, Bachelors and Masters) and 48 certificates and endorsements. Fewer than one-third of the Class of 2009 or roughly 80 graduates participated in the Sunday, May 3 ceremony. "Traditionally about one third of the graduating class walks at graduation," said UAS curriculum coordinator and degree specialist Peter Sommers. "But this year Summer 2008 and Fall 2009 graduates from out of town who wanted

Portrait of a 2009 UAS Graduate

Macaela Ponce

"The math and biology programs at UAS are inferior to none. I had the opportunity to work with some of the finest population biologists and gain world-class research experience. It was amazing."

—Micaela Ponce

Outstanding Natural Sciences graduate Micaela Ponce double majored in Biology and Mathematics. This picture was taken when she spent three weeks on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) Research Vessel Albatross IV for a North Atlantic Research Cruise to study fish diversity and abundance in areas closed to commercial fishing. Ponce leaves UAS with an offer for a PhD position in the study of infectious disease in ecology.



to come back for commencement said they couldn't afford it due to the economy." Thirty-four UAS Sitka and nineteen UAS Ketchikan students received degrees and/or certificates.

Juneau Regent Kent Fischer conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree on UAS advisory board member and foundation trustee Laraine Derr. Sitka Regent Robert Martin conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree on Marlene Johnson. After introductions in Tlingit, he noted her work to insure the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act through Congress.



Cedar Log ready to become Eagle Pole after Welcoming Ceremony

Thursday, May 7, 2009 UAS staff, faculty and students welcomed a 15 ton red cedar log onto the Mourant courtyard at a ceremony hosted by the Wooch. Een club. Local elders attended the event. After remarks by Chancellor John Pugh and songs by dancers Vanessa Early and Lyle James, the 45-foot long, 15-ton log was placed under the canopy of the Egan Classroom wing, where it will be carved this summer by artists from Hydaburg on Prince of Whales Island. The log is from a tree near Klawock on P.O.W. It is estimated to be at least 500 years old.

The artists will complete an eagle totem pole by September. The university will launch a fund-raising effort to purchase the pole from Sealaska Heritage Institute and raise it on campus in 2010. The finished pole will be painted and measure 36 feet.

Moving the log from the back of an Alaska Marine Lines flat bed semi-truck was a painstaking and time consuming operation that required careful, minute adjustments. The truck backed up as close to the pillars of the overhang as possible. Then a boom truck with a crane lifted the log up and lowered it slowly as crews on both ends turned the log to angle it in between the pillars. A crew of about a half dozen men armed with two by fours pushed inch by inch to roll the log onto metal rollers and jimmy it into place.

Artists Joe and TJ Young have won a contract to carve the totem pole for Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) on behalf of the University of Alaska Southeast.

A selection committee comprised of SHI and UAS representatives chose the brothers from a pool of applicants.

"I'm very pleased we did have a number of artists who submitted bids and I will say it was a difficult decision because we had some really very exciting designs from the different artists," said SHI President Rosita Worl.

"I really want to thank Sealaska, the Aak'w Kwáan and our student group Wooch.éen for working with the university on this project," said UAS Chancellor John Pugh. "I am pleased this is taking place on the UAS campus so students can observe the carving process."

The artists are Sealaska shareholders and have carved other totems, including a 40-foot pole for the Sitka National Historical Park and a 32-foot crest pole for the Hydaburg Totem Park.

The goal of the project is to balance the Raven pole that was donated to UAS and erected in 1993. Native people belong to either the Eagle or Raven moiety, and in ceremonies and at secular events both moieties are represented for balance.

"It's really nice to get an all-Eagle totem pole to complement the existing all-Raven totem pole. The Raven is going to be happy," said Aak'w Kwáan Elder Marie Olson.

Elders of the Aak'w Kwáan met with Wooch.éen, a Native student club on campus, to identify the Eagle clan crests to be featured on the totem. They wanted to give special recognition to the Wooshkeetaan, an Eagle clan from the Juneau area. The pole will feature Eagle to represent all Eagle clans plus Shark, Wolf and Thunderbird, with Shark



representing the Wooshkeetaan.

"But it's more than just a Shark, it's an anthropomorphic figure signifying the students who are attending the university," said Worl.

At the close of the welcoming ceremony, Aak'w Kwáan dog salmon clan member Bob Samm also acknowledged UAS students. "I want to thank the most important people here, the students. They give this place life," he said. "It makes my heart feel good to see young people walking this land. I also believe if you have a good foundation and you know who you are and where you come from you can be whatever you want to be. I am so proud you are taking the lead to have balance on this land. *Gunaalsbeesh* to the students!"

A reception immediately followed the welcoming ceremony at the Native and Rural Student Center.